Daily Report

Latin America

FBIS-LAT-93-107
Monday
7 June 1993

Daily Report
Latin America

FBIS-LAT-93-107 *7 June 1993*

CONTENTS

NOTICE TO READERS: An * indicates material not disseminated in electronic form.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Guatemala

Opposition Leader Solorzano on Agreement With Army *[ACAN]* 1
Army Issues Document Denying Coup, Countercoup *[Guatemala City Radio]* 1
Cabinet Members Resign at Espina's Request *[PRENSA LIBRE 4 Jun]* 1
State, Private Labor Unions Begin Anti-Espina Strike *[EL GRAFICO 4 Jun]* 2
Judge Initiates Serrano Extradition From El Salvador *[Guatemala City Radio]* 2
Congress To Elect New President, Vice President 5 Jun *[Guatemala City Radio]* 3
Constitutional Court Rules Out Espina as President *[Guatemala City Radio]* 3
Espina Reportedly Leaves for El Salvador *[NOTIMEX]* 3
Consensus To Appoint New President 'Celebrated' *[ACAN]* 3
De Leon Carpio Accepts Presidential Nomination *[Guatemala City Radio]* 4
Congress Declares Serrano, Espina Posts 'Vacant' *[ACAN]* 5
Herbruger Concedes Defeat, Recognizes De Leon *[Guatemala City TV]* 5
Congress Declares Ramiro De Leon Carpio President *[Guatemala City Radio, TV]* 6
President-elect De Leon Carpio Interviewed *[Guatemala City TV]* 6
Meets With Reporters *[ACAN]* 8
Addresses Congress *[Guatemala City Radio, TV]* 8

SOUTH AMERICA

Bolivia

Election Campaign Ends; National Borders To Close 6 Jun *[Madrid EFE]* 11
Electoral Court President: Elections 'Going Well' Overall *[La Paz TV]* 11
MNR's Sanchez de Lozada Reportedly Wins Election *[La Paz Radio]* 11
Sanchez de Lozada 'Convinced' of Election Victory *[La Paz Radio]* 11
Ballot Shortage Causes Chaos; Polls To Finish 13 Jun *[Madrid EFE]* 12
MNR Keeps Lead With 700,000 Votes Counted *[La Paz Radio]* 12
President Hopes New Government Will Be 'More Efficient' *[Madrid EFE]* 12

Venezuela

Congress Session Begins, Vote Expected *[Caracas Radio]* 13
Congress Expected To Name Velasquez President *[Caracas TV]* 13
Defense Minister Comments on Velasquez' Nomination *[Caracas TV]* 14
Acting President Lepage Addresses Nation *[Caracas Radio, TV]* 14
Congress Elects Velasquez New Acting President *[Caracas TV]* 15
Congress President Delivers Address at Oath Ceremony *[Caracas TV]* 16
Velasquez Delivers Oath of Office Address *[Caracas TV]* 17
President Velasquez Interviewed on Outlook *[Caracas TV]* 20
Politicians Comment on New Venezuelan President *[Caracas TV]* 27

Guatemala

Opposition Leader Solorzano on Agreement With Army

PA0506011493 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 0032 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Text] Guatemala City, 4 Jun (ACAN-EFE)—Political sources report that the Guatemalan opposition reached an agreement on 4 June, supported by the Army, to elect a new president at Congress and prevent Vice President Gustavo Espina from assuming the presidency.

Mario Solorzano, leader of the Democratic Socialist Party [PDS], on 4 June reported that the political parties, businessmen, labor unions, and popular organizations that comprise the so-called National Consensus Coalition notified the military high command of their decision to reject Espina and support the election of a new president. The military leadership supported their initiative.

Espina's presidential plans depended on the support of the Army, which considered his appointment as president the only constitutional solution to the 11-day crisis.

Congress President Jose Lobo Dubon, who ruled out Espina's appointment given his involvement in the 25 May self-inflicted coup, has summoned Congress to a plenary session on 5 June to choose the new president.

Army Issues Document Denying Coup, Countercoup

PA0406140893 Guatemala City Cadena de Emisoras Unidas in Spanish 1227 GMT 4 Jun 93

[Text] The Army has denied that there has been a military coup or countercoup in Guatemala to oust President Jorge Serrano and has rejected claims that it intends to assume political power. The armed institution issued a nine-point document accepting its responsibility to maintain full constitutional order. The document notes that the decision to suspend parts of the Constitution was a political decision made by Serrano, who, in a [word indistinct] manner, assumed his responsibility and the consequences. The Army also recalled that it acted [words indistinct] required by the Constitutionality Court so its ruling could be complied with to restore institutional and constitutional order.

Cabinet Members Resign at Espina's Request

PA0406210593 Guatemala City PRENSA LIBRE in Spanish 4 Jun 93 p 3

[Text] In response to an order by Acting President Gustavo Espina, government ministers and secretaries tendered their resignations on 3 June.

The ministers and some trusted officials of the previous president observed Espina's request, made on the evening of 2 June before Congress, under the argument that he needed to be free to select his own cabinet should the legislative branch decide to appoint him.

Defense Minister General Jose Domingo Garcia Samayoa, on the other hand, cannot tender his resignation because of the nature of his duties, a military officer, who asked not to be identified, reported on 3 June.

He explained that a military officer is either "discharged or dismissed" from the military and that situation originates in the expiration of his time in service or by a superior order. The source ruled out that the current defense minister will follow the request made by the supposed president of the Republic.

Government Minister Francisco Rolando Perdomo Sandoval did not tender his resignation nor has he been seen in public since 31 May, when he learned of the military decision to respect a resolution by the Constitutionality Court and the "withdrawal" of Jorge Serrano from the presidency.

Perdomo signed, with former head of state Jorge Serrano, the decree-law that contained the "Temporary Government Regulations," whereby the nation's basic constitutional guarantees were suspended for eight days.

Sources close to the minister said he is in the country's interior. This report could not be officially confirmed. Deputy Government Minister Ronan Roca Mendez, who is in charge of administrative affairs, reported on 3 June that Perdomo was exercising his duties, meeting with Espina.

At the request of the Attorney General's Office, Miguel Angel Solorzano, Fourth Criminal Court judge, appeared on 3 June at the office of the government minister to verify if Perdomo was working.

However, the judge did not find Perdomo, so he briefly conversed with Roca Menendez, who told him the same thing that he told the press.

The judge said this was a preliminary step in the process. The Office of the Attorney General began by asking the judge to arrest Perdomo and Espina Salguero, who are accused of violating the Constitution, rebelling, inciting the public, contempt, abandoning their posts, usurpation, and embezzlement, etc.

As a result of the 2 June meeting at the Development Ministry, in which most of the ministers of state participated, the consensus of the officials was to present their personal resignation letters, regardless of who takes over the presidency.

Before presenting his resignation, Agriculture Minister Adolfo Boppel Carrera said on 3 June that he did it to comply with a request from Espina, with whom he is willing to continue working.

Eusebio del Cid Peralta, public health and social welfare minister, and his two deputy ministers also presented

their resignations on 3 June to Espina. The minister said that if he is asked to continue in the post, he "would gladly accept."

In the meantime, they will remain in their posts because the law obligates them not to abandon their post until a superior authority accepts their resignations and appoints their respective replacements.

Out of the ministers who work at the National Palace, the following ministers on 3 June went to their offices: Public health, agriculture, foreign relations, communications, and the deputy ministers of government and of education.

State, Private Labor Unions Begin Anti-Espina Strike

PA0406200893 Guatemala City EL GRAFICO in Spanish 4 Jun 93 p 4

[Text] Workers of all state institutions and some from the private sector began a national strike on 4 June to pressure the government of Gustavo Espina Salguero, who allegedly violated the Constitution on 25 May.

The Labor and Popular Action Union (UASP), which is made up of labor organizations of state and private institutions, urged all of Guatemala to join the peoples opposition movement.

During a news conference, members of these labor organizations said: "We called on market, transportation, and bank workers to join the struggle for justice and democracy."

Trucks transporting people from the countryside have been arriving from the Atlantic route and Roosevelt Highway since 3 June. One labor leader said: "Most of the people coming to protest against Espina are peasants."

UASP leader Alberto Villar Anleu said: "We are calling on the Guatemalans to join our protest on 4 June."

Villar added: "Our national strike aims to repudiate the plans of traditional groups to install Espina as president."

He said: "We think Espina's attitude is another blow to Guatemala's civilian society. These groups continue to play with our aspirations of having a genuine and participatory democracy. We cannot allow someone who participated directly and morally in Jorge Serrano's 25 May coup d'etat to assume the presidency."

The labor leader said that this is a general strike. "This is why we urged markets not to open, transportation workers not to offer their services, and banks to stop their operations," Villar Anleu added.

Judge Initiates Serrano Extradition From El Salvador

PA0406203693 Guatemala City Cadena de Emisoras Unidas in Spanish 1856 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Report by Oneida Najarro]

[Text] The appropriate judge has just filed an order for the extradition of former president Jorge Serrano Elias at the Foreign Ministry. Here are Fourth Trial Judge Miguel Angel Solorzano and [name indistinct] Robles, chief of the District Attorney's Office of the General Attorney's Office.

[Begin recording] [Solorzano] I came accompanied by Walter Robles, chief of the District Attorney's Office, and other public prosecutors, to submit a request to the Salvadoran Government to arrest Jorge Serrano Elias, as the first phase in obtaining his extradition. The document was personally delivered to the reception desk because there is no one in charge at the Foreign Ministry. The foreign minister and his deputy ministers are not there. That is why we are here.

[Najarro] How long will this procedure take?

[Solorzano] The request must be processed immediately.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Solorzano] Exactly, that is the purpose of the extradition, to try him based on the charges that the Attorney General's Office has filed before the Fourth Trial Court.

[Najarro] He no longer has the right....

[Solorzano, interrupting] He no longer has that right, since he is no longer president.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Solorzano] That is of no importance because he violated the Constitution. That is one of the worst offenses, and the reason we are requesting his extradition.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Solorzano] The chief of the District Attorney's Office can give further details.

[Robles] Since the charges were filed in court, the order for the arrest of former President Serrano Elias was issued. Today, we notified the police general director so he can report within hours on the circumstances and manner in which Mr. Serrano left the country. The case involves 11 offenses, including violation of the Constitution, and other offenses related to the usurpation of functions, rebellion, sedition, and articles related to violating the Constitution.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Robles] There are two pretrial motions at the Supreme Court of Justice against Vice President Gustavo Espina and Government Minister Francisco Perdomo. These

are the people that the Attorney General's Office believes also bear a responsibility. As part of the actions already taken by the judge, we are studying whether or not other persons are involved. The Attorney General's Office will request (?punishment) for those persons.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Robles] Because of the phase this process is in, we cannot mention them, but the vice president did not act alone. Other persons are involved.

[Najarro] [Question indistinct]

[Robles] Yes, some officials. [end recording].

Congress To Elect New President, Vice President 5 Jun

PA0406230093 Guatemala City Cadena de Emisoras Unidas in Spanish 2200 GMT 4 Jun 93

[Report by Lucia Dubon from Congress—live]

[Text] This afternoon, the president of Congress called a plenary session to be held on Saturday, 5 June, starting at 1000 [1600 GMT], to elect a new president and vice president. Congress President Jose Lobo Dubon has concluded, after hearing the opinion of various jurists, that when the de facto government was in place, the president and the vice president violated the Constitution. Here is the information:

[Begin Lobo recording] The interpretations rendered by the Constitutional Court and well-known jurists all agree that the Constitution was violated for several days through a de facto government. The Constitutional Court ruling fully reestablished the Constitution; this is why state organizations have been reinstated. This occurred when former President Serrano Elias abandoned his post. In such cases, the Constitution establishes that the vice president should assume the role of president and that he will eventually be sworn in as president. In this case, however, it is clear that the vice president also violated the Constitution. Now that the state organizations have been reinstated, in this case the Congress.... [5-second break in reception] both the president and the vice president violated the Constitution. Therefore, Congress has to elect the new president, with a two-third's majority. The vice president is also to be elected by Congress from three nominees proposed by the elected president. [end recording]

Constitutional Court Rules Out Espina as President

PA0506030293 Guatemala City Cadena de Emisoras Unidas in Spanish 0235 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Text] The Constitutional Court, in a resolution issued a few moments ago, announced that Mr. Gustavo Espina Salguero is ineligible for the post of president of the Republic because the vice president shares political responsibility for the coup d'etat with President Serrano. In view of the total absence of a president and vice president of the Republic, Congress must appoint a president. To this end, a 24-hour deadline has been established for Congress to fulfill the resolution and in due time to appoint a vice president to complete the current constitutional term, in accordance with the Constitution.

Espina Reportedly Leaves for El Salvador

PA0506145393 Mexico City NOTIMEX in Spanish 1344 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Text] Guatemala City, 5 Jun (NOTIMEX)—Provisional President Gustavo Espina reportedly left for El Salvador in the early morning hours of 5 June after he was declared ineligible to hold the post.

It has been impossible to confirm this report, which was broadcast last night by the "News Seven" ["Notisiete"] television newscast and by Cadena de Emisoras Unidas' "News Patrol" ["Patrullaje Informativo"] newscast in the predawn hours of 5 June. In a confusing legal situation, the Congress refused to confirm Espina, who according to the Constitution would have to take over as president after former President Jorge Serrano Elias was removed.

The Congress and the Constitutionality Court announced on the night of 4 June that Espina was ineligible to hold the presidency because of his involvement in the self-inflicted coup on 25 May. Espina announced that he would hold a news conference on that day at 1800 [0000 GMT] over a radio and television network, but it was canceled following a two-hour wait.

Also unknown are the whereabouts of Government Minister Francisco Perdomo, who signed with Serrano the decree dissolving Congress and the Supreme Court of Justice.

The General Attorney's Office filed charges against Serrano, Espina, and Perdomo before the country's court for offenses that include violating the Constitution.

In addition, newspaper reports state that the director of the Guatemalan Social Security Institute resigned because he did not support the Espina government.

Consensus To Appoint New President 'Celebrated'

PA0506205393 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 1940 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Text] Guatemala City, 5 Jun (ACAN-EFE)—The military High Command of Guatemala on 5 June "celebrated" the national consensus to appoint a new president within the next few hours, after meeting with OAS Secretary General Joao Baena Soares.

This was the first reaction by the military following the announcement made on 4 June that a national agreement between political and social forces—supported by the Constitutional Court—was reached to prevent Vice

President Gustavo Espina, who was initially supported by the Army, from becoming head of state.

Baena Soares, who arrived on 5 June in Guatemala for the second time in one week to examine the country's situation, met with various Guatemalan personalities. He said he hopes to be able to state in his report to the OAS that the Guatemalan crisis has been solved.

After the meeting with Baena, in statements to the press, Defense Minister General Jose Domingo Garcia Samayoa said he celebrated the national consensus that has been reached, but he stressed that the Armed Forces "do not support anyone" and they only fulfill their duty.

However, in the last 11 days, the general first voiced the support of the military for Jorge Serrano. Later, he announced Serrano's resignation and supported the election of a new president by Congress. And finally, in a 180-degree spin, he appeared at the home of Vice President Espina to announce that the Armed Forces supported his proclamation as president.

The Constitutional Court on 4 June declared that Espina could not exercise the vice presidency of aspiring to the presidency, given his implication in the self-inflicted coup by Serrano on 25 May.

The defense minister stated that he met with the vice president on the evening of 4 June and—in apparent reference to Serrano—"he was willing to let others give him counseling" and heard the reasoning on the problems of legitimacy that undermined his presidential aspirations, which have been practically rejected by the entire society.

Garcia Samayoa also denied that there have been acts of treason, uprisings, or purges within the Army, adding that the latest changes of high-ranking military officers were normal.

Political sources and the local media, however, said that moderate sectors within the military were pushed aside by the hard-liners who support Espina.

One of the generals, who accompanied him in the meeting with Baena, Mario Enriquez, denied that he had been discharged, but confirmed that seven military intelligence members have been transferred and refused to give his opinion on the matter.

In addition to these two generals, two of the military officers believed to have the most power within the armed institution and a greater influence in the crisis attended the meeting with Baena. They are Francisco Ortega Menaldo, chief of the presidential general staff, and Division General Jorge Alberto Perussina, chief of the general staff of the National Defense, who made no statement.

Baena Soares also met with Epaminondas Gonzalez, president of the Constitutional Court, during his first few hours in Guatemala.

According to Gonzalez, Baena told him that he was pleased with the two resolutions issued by the court, first against the self- inflicted coup staged by President Jorge Serrano and also against the attempts made by Espina to be chosen president.

"The solution of the crisis is on the right path and there is tranquility because it has been handled according to the legal order," Gonzalez said.

Meanwhile, there was a delay in starting the Congress sessions to elect a president and a vice president because of the slow arrival of deputies and by the meetings held by political and civilian groups to nominate candidates.

De Leon Carpio Accepts Presidential Nomination

PA0606015293 Guatemala City Cadena de Emisoras Unidas in Spanish 2252 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Interview with Ramiro de Leon Carpio, Guatemalan presidential nominee, by an unidentified reporter, on 5 June; place not given—recorded]

[Excerpt] Announcer Lucia Dubon reports that Ramiro de Leon Carpio has confirmed his official acceptance of his nomination as presidential candidate. The elections will take place in Congress shortly.

Here is the information:

[Begin recording] [De Leon] This is a crucial moment for Guatemala [words indistinct]. This is one of the worst crises Guatemala has ever endured. This is a challenge to the country, to the nation, and for this reason I believe [words indistinct]. The first thing I would try to do is to unite the Guatemalan people. This is a country of [word indistinct], a country of violence. [Words indistinct] to secure the unity of the Guatemalans. I am committed at the world level to call on all sectors to reach a grand commitment and to adopt the most suitable measures to save the country.

This has been a great crisis. If we start to recover [words indistinct] to learn from some democracies and to show that when there are crises like that of recent days, we are able to pull out of them the legal and constitutional way because we have a democratic system.

[Reporter] Do you believe [words indistinct]?

[De Leon] I think that as the president of the Constituent Assembly [words indistinct], my performance in the posts that I have held, especially as human rights ombudsman, put me in a special position, a position very close to the Guatemalan people, to their true situation. This is a leading role that I have not sought, but that has been approaching slowly [words indistinct] qualities and this has allowed me to be close to the people. My political and administrative experience has created the possibility of my leading the country. I assume this possibility with much concern, but also with much satisfaction because it means that I could further contribute to resolving this country's problems.

Based on this experience and this leadership I would have the authority to convoke the country's popular sectors [words indistinct] the Guatemalan people through the participation of all sectors.

I trust [words indistinct] that we can pull out of a crisis as profound as this one and show the entire world and Latin America that our democracy has democratic ways to get out of its crises. He who has never stumbled does not know whether or not he would be able to get back on his feet. We in Guatemala have stumbled, from a constitutional point of view, but we are getting back on our feet. I believe, without false modesty, that I have the ability to unite the people and enough credibility to convoke the various sectors, to produce the unity of the Guatemalans which we need so much.

[Reporter] [Question indistinct]

[De Leon] No, I do not think so because I have held talks with them and because of information I have thanks to my position as human rights ombudsman [words indistinct] the military to know officers closely and to given them conferences on the human rights issue. This has allowed me to know that in the Army there is interest in working within the framework of the democratic system and adapting to constitutional norms in a democratic system that is making progress and has to be consolidated.

In the case of the enterprise and economic sectors, I am going to talk with them if I am elected. I am not going to confront them; I am going to work with them and with the popular and working classes. I believe the idea is to secure a consensus and to resolve problems through dialogue and through listening to the various groups.

My most important mission would be to conciliate these various interests.

[Reporter] [Question indistinct]

[De Leon] What happens is that my work as ombudsman, which is known internationally, is controversial. It is a source of controversy when confronting it with the various power sectors, the formal and the real power sectors, because [words indistinct] pointed at by the media, or in this case, by the [word indistinct]. But this is a post that I held. I think I acted objectively and in an unbiased manner. [Words indistinct] if I am elected president, I would be closer to the people, and the security forces and the government institutions would be more able to contribute to peace and liberty in Guatemala, to march on the road to real democracy and liberty. These things do not worry me. I think I will govern with all of the sectors, not against them. The moment that I become president of Guatemala, I will cease being what I have been until now [words indistinct] to become the representative of the national honor. My role would not be a confrontational one; on the contrary, it would be a uniting role that would cause us to march forward. [words indistinct]

[Reporter] [Question indistinct]

[De Leon] I have always believed that my democratic concepts allow me to characterize myself as a democrat with a working spirit. Above all, I cannot stand violence, I cannot tolerate injustice, and I love brotherhood. [passage omitted]

Congress Declares Serrano, Espina Posts 'Vacant'

PA0606031893 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 0202 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Text] Guatemala City, 5 Jun (ACAN-EFE)—The Guatemalan Congress on 5 June fired Jorge Serrano from his post as president by declaring it "vacant," as well as the post of Vice President Gustavo Espina.

Congress agreed in the same resolution, approved by more than a two-thirds majority, to "immediately" elect a new president and vice president.

The deputies explained that the Constitution had been violated by Serrano and Espina in the 25 May self-inflicted coup.

Herbruger Concedes Defeat, Recognizes De Leon

PA0606052793 Guatemala City Teleonce Television in Sparish 0425 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Interview with Arturo Herbruger, presidential candidate and former president of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, by an unidentified reporter on the evening of 5 June in Guatemala City—live]

[Text] [Herbruger, in progress] ....He obtained an absolute majority. My friendship with Ramiro De Leon goes back many years and I do not want any conflict. Having really lost the election I want to desist from a further round of balloting.

[Unidentified reporter] In other words, [words indistinct]. How many votes does Ramiro De Leon Carpio need to receive?

[Herbruger] He would have to get 79 votes.

[Reporter] How many did he receive?

[Herbruger] He got 74 votes.

[Reporter] Then, you decline to take part in another round?

[Herbruger] Correct, I decline.

[Reporter] Who is the president of Guatemala then?

[Herbruger] Ramiro De Leon Carpio. I do not know if new balloting will be held to ensure he wins with the required two- thirds vote of the Congress. I believe the correct way is to declare him the winner.

[Reporter] For the good of Guatemala.

[Herbruger] That is right.

[Reporter] To ensure that Guatemala returns to a de jure state quickly.

[Herbruger] Yes, and also because of my friendship with Ramiro.

[Reporter] Will you return to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal?

[Herbruger] No, I resigned from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in order to take part in this election and my resignation was accepted by the Republic's Congress, so I will not return.

[Reporter] [words indistinct].

[Herbruger] [words indistinct] [laughs].

Congress Declares Ramiro De Leon Carpio President

PA0606061193 Guatemala City Radio and Television Networks in Spanish 0519 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Statement by Guatemalan Congress secretary at Congress session to elect a new president of the Republic—live]

[Text] In view of the voting results announced by the secretariat of Congress, and in the name of the Congress of the Republic and the people represented here, I declare citizen Ramiro De Leon Carpio president of the Republic to complete the constitutional term, which ends on 14 January 1996. [applause] [crowd chants: De Leon] The Congress of the Republic of Guatemala declares:

Whereas: Congress, declared vacant, in accordance with the law, the post of president of the Republic for the constitutional period between 14 January 1991 and 14 January 1996;

The Congress, having held an election to choose the citizen who must fill this vacancy, in compliance with what is described under subpart A of Articles 171 and 189—both of the Republic of Guatemala's political Constitution, decrees:

Article 1. Declare citizen Ramiro De Leon Carpio as elected president of the Republic of Guatemala to complete the term that ends on 14 January 1996;

Article 2. This decree becomes effective immediately and must be published in the Official Gazette.

The following privileged motion has been presented to this secretariat:

The undersigned Congress deputies propose the following privileged motion:

That the statement read by the secretary be declared of national urgency and approved in a single reading in accordance with Article 176 of the Republic's Constitution.

[signed] Committee Chairmen (Julio Gaviria Saez) and (Pais Duran).

President-elect De Leon Carpio Interviewed

PA0606065393 Guatemala City Teleonce Television in Spanish 0445 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Interview with Guatemalan President-elect Ramiro de Leon Carpio by unidentified reporter at De Leon's home in Guatemala City on 5 June—live or recorded]

[Text] [De Leon Carpio] Actually, on 5 June, making somewhat of an ironic analysis, I was laughing and saying that in few places in the world and in few periods in history has a president arrived at the Presidency of a Republic like Guatemala without spending a single cent, without any propaganda, without making promises other than to the fatherland. This allows me to find the best people. I do not belong to any political party. I will request the participation of all sectors: the religious sector, the business sector, the productive sector—both capital and labor—the Indian sector, the religious sector [as heard]; in other words, of the entire Guatemalan nation. I have a great deal of faith in God and in the Guatemalans. I will start from point zero now, and without looking back, because he who looks back when he is walking stumbles easily. I will follow that entire philosophy, with my principles, based on social sensitivity. I believe that I am a simple man and I hope to continue to be one. If I do not, the press should please remind me to be so.

I want to continue upholding the principles that have always kept me going, namely: I do not tolerate violence, nor do I tolerate injustice, and I love freedom. In that sense, with practical things, seeking advice, establishing an honest and competent team, I promise that I am going to head a government whose actions will be crystal clear because that is what the Guatemalan people want. In this regard, I have hope.

Difficult times are ahead for the government that I will head, but I believe that with determination and competence we will move forward. I have great faith in the Guatemalan people.

[Reporter] You have not mentioned the Army.

[De Leon] Well, the Army is a part of the government, and from the moment I am sworn in, I become the representative of national unity, not the president of any one group, nor a person who defends certain interests over others. I become the president of all Guatemalans and I will defend the interests of all the people.

Within the government, there is an institution called the Guatemalan Army. It is the armed institution, included in Guatemala's Constitution with specific functions, and I believe that the Army will participate in the projects that we will implement, fulfilling its constitutional functions, for the economic, political, social, and cultural development of all Guatemalans. I am sure that all

institutions will do this. I believe greatly in strengthening a country's institutions. Developed countries depend on the strength, and on the strengthening of their institutions, and I wish to strengthen all institutions. I want to see that every institution enjoys great prestige. In this regard, I want the Guatemalan Army to become more professional every day, to fulfill its role and be prestigious and revered and seen by Guatemalans as an institution that fulfills its obligations and carries out its functions, just like the other institutions that make up the state. The state is a single entity. Its institutions have common goals and the institutions cannot go their own way.

May God grant.... [pauses] I hope to be enlightened by God so that I may become a statesman, a person who leads the nation, but who is helped by the sense of responsibility, seriousness, and honesty of each of the institutions that make up the state.

[Reporter] Some days ago, right here at your house, you said that you were persecuted. What do you think of your persecutors now?

[De Leon] I believe one has to be able to forgive. There are times in life when one makes sharp remarks, moments of anger, and naturally I had endured those abuses. Perhaps we could write something about abuse of power, of the jump from victimization to power, in order to describe it in some way. At the time, I did not have the slightest idea that I would be elected president of the Republic. However, I have enough sensitivity to forgive errors. In addition, despite my cordiality, I am very firm in my decisions, and I think that is what the country needs—not a person who just demonstrates his goodness. A man can be good, but he should also be firm. But I am no longer thinking of the past problems. It is already history. The only thing that I regret is that, due to the problems I had, my three children are not in Guatemala. At this time, I am going to contact them because they will be thrilled and eager to come to congratulate their father and give him a hug, and I also feel the same, of course. Aside from that, the problems are forgotten.

[Reporter] Will you follow up on the trials that you have initiated?

[De Leon] I have this opinion: I was chosen because of certain conditions and qualities to unite the Guatemalan people, to eliminate the lack of unity that exists in Guatemala. I do not believe in revenge. As of now, though, I am an authority and I will comply with the law and I am going to enforce its compliance, as the Constitution demands, but I will not engage in a witch hunt, as it is said in political terminology.

[Reporter] Do you have a vice president in mind?

[De Leon] No. I have not had time for that. According to the Constitution I must propose a list of three persons. I will try to include honest and capable people who can help the president and who can fulfill the functions that the Constitution assigns to the vice president. In the past, constitutions portrayed the vice president as a decorative figure. He had very few functions to carry out. This is not the way now. The current Constitution assigns truly important functions to the vice president. I will ask whoever is elected vice president by Congress to exercise all of those functions. I will ask him for his cooperation. I also will give him all my support so that together we may lead the nation.

[Reporter] What will be your immediate task at the international level, especially at the regional level?

[De Leon] This is a most important factor right now. I hope that with this full return to constitutionality and institutional order, the countries that are friends of Guatemala, the international community, will immediately eliminate any obstacles that they have imposed. I hope to be able to talk soon with the representatives of these friendly countries so that the economic aid, whose suspension had been ordered, may again arrive and so that our relations may be as cordial as possible because Guatemala needs international aid.

I hope that our return to institutional order and the excellent relations that I, as human rights ombudsman, held with those representatives, the representatives of the various nations, will allow us to maintain the excellent relations that have existed between Guatemala and those countries.

[Reporter] Specifically in the case of relations with the United States and Central American integration?

[De Leon] In the speech I will deliver today, if you give me the time to prepare it, I will refer to that. Central American integration is most important for Guatemala, from an economic point of view. I am going to promote and to continue with what has been initiated in this regard.

[Reporter] Do you wish to add anything as president?

[De Leon] Being surrounded by so many of my journalist friends, I would like to add something very special: I want to thank the national media. I have always said that the media has always been a bulwark for me both in and outside Guatemala. I also want to thank all my friends, my relatives, and the Guatemalan people, but I also want to pay homage to you, not because you are here but because you deserve it. I pay homage not only to the media, to the media directors, but also to the reporters—the reporters that brave street news, that chase the news on the streets, reporters that I view as friends, reporters with whom I have very often shared difficult situations, reporters who make good journalism and who sometimes have difficulties having access to the sources and who allow the people to be informed about what is happening. They exercise the human right to report and at the same time they allow the people to enjoy the social human right to be informed.

Thank you, journalist friends, for all you have done for me and for Guatemala. I urge you to continue to struggle.

I hope, as I said a while ago to a distinguished journalist and friend, Marroquin, who is here, I hope that you criticize me a lot. Do not stop criticizing me. Do it the way it should be done, but just do it. Criticize me. I will be willing to listen to your criticism because this is the way one can see errors that have been committed, human errors that must be acknowledged. I hope to be able to do this.

[Reporter] Perfect! [Applause]

Meets With Reporters

PA0606083693 Panama City ACAN in Spanish 0545 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Text] Guatemala City, 5 Jun (ACAN-EFE)—New Guatemalan President Ramiro de Leon Carpio announced on 5 June that he seeks to govern through a vast national agreement to bring Guatemala out of its current crisis.

De Leon told newsmen that he will request immediately that the international community lift the sanctions imposed on Guatemala, after the Central American nation experienced a total return to constitutional order on 5 June.

"It is the historic moment to save Guatemala," he said, after requesting "the support of all sectors" of the nation.

He also defined himself as a "democrat by conviction, who believes in independent powers."

Regarding the trial of and request for the extradition of former President Jorge Serrano who is in El Salvador, he said he will strive "to have the law and the Constitution fulfilled."

Serrano and his Vice President Gustavo Espina were removed from their posts by the Constitutional Court, according to a resolution read today in the Congress, as a result of the 25 May self-coup in which both were considered accomplices.

De Leon said that he is aware of the vast responsibility that he assumes as president of Guatemala at this moment. He noted that he wants to fulfill the expectations of those who have placed their confidence in him.

The new Guatemalan president said the political crisis has taught Guatemala the lesson that "the democratic system is fragile, yet has proven that when it fails there are constitutional paths that permit us to return to order."

"To walk without falling is not meritorious, but when one falls and picks oneself up constitutionally, it is meritorious," he added.

The former deputy and leader of the conservative Union of the National Center (UCN) party gave assurances that his opposition to Serrano's de facto regime was exclusively intended to return to the Constitution and he never strived to follow him in power.

He added, however: "I cannot avoid those who see me as the person who is capable of returning calm to the country."

He also denied that the Army had vetoed him to be president due to charges that he has launched against the armed institution from the Office of Ombudsman for Human Rights Cases.

There are military sectors, he said, which have expressed their support to him; furthermore, the Armed Forces pledged to respect the Congress' decision.

He admitted, however, that as ombudsman he had certain differences with the Army, which charged he is biased. Nevertheless, he trusts that the Army plays its role within the democratic process.

De Leon, who is 50, said that he will ask, to ensure that his administration forges ahead, as much advice as needed in all fields, adding that he was sure to have the support of the international community, which gave him support while he was ombudsman for Human Rights Cases.

He added that for his political work he has the advantage of not having taken part in a political campaign, thus, he did not make any offers that will limit his work.

De Leon Carpio, who was proposed for president together with two other important persons by a National Consensus, trusts to have in his government the broad support that Guatemalans have given him to become president.

The National Consensus comprises political parties, business organizations, unions, and civic organizations, which proposed, with the support of the Constitutional Court, the formula of the presidential election in Congress and refused to allow Serrano to be replaced by his vice president, Gustavo Espina.

Addresses Congress

PA0606095193 Guatemala City Radio and Television Networks in Spanish 0705 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Speech by Ramiro de Leon Carpio, "constitutional president of the Republic of Guatemala for the period between 5 June 1993 and 14 January 1994," at the National Congress in Guatemala City—live]

[Text] Mr. President of the Congress of the Republic; Mr. Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court; Mr. Acting President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal; Mssrs. members of the Supreme Court of Justice; Mssrs. members of the Constitutional Court; Mr. Comptroller General; Mr. Attorney General of the nation; Mssrs. members of the diplomatic and consular corps accredited in our country; civilian and military authorities; Mssrs. Deputies of the Congress of the Republic; Mssrs. members of the local and foreign press; parents, friends [words indistinct]; Guatemalan people:

Never before in our country's history have we experienced a political crisis of this magnitude. Our country's incipient democracy, achieved by means of so much sacrifice, so much blood, and so much privation, was seriously threatened by those who, bypassing the ideals of a noble people [words indistinct] the basic charter of government, the basis of our juridical and legal structure, namely, our Constitution. Never before were we so close to returning to the times of dark dictatorship or so close to being among the societies that are considered most politically backward. Never before were we on the verge of seeing our hopes of bequeathing a better homeland to our children vanish into thin air. However, there is no doubt that this country is blessed by God. In a matter of a few hours, the iron will and the bravery of the Guatemalan people have given the fatherland a new and great opportunity—perhaps the last one in this century. It is an excellent opportunity to correct our path and, learning from our mistakes, for all of us --listen closely, all of us—to build a new nation in line with Guatemalans' aspirations, and in line with today's reality.

This event, unprecedented in Guatemalan history, and an example for Latin America and the entire world, has brought to the fore a factor that I would like to highlight. The commitment to life in democracy is already rooted in Guatemalans. The brave and noble Guatemalan people [words indistinct] of social coexistence in harmony and peace. Despite the differences and disagreements that might exist among them, Guatemalans are able to reach agreements and consensus. Moreover, to strengthen democracy and development honest Guatemalans are capable of moving mountains.

Guatemalans, today I have assumed a tremendous responsibility before God and my fatherland. Today, you have placed in my hands a task to which I will apply my greatest energy and ability. I will spare no effort to create the conditions that will allow our country to get on the right path to build our development on solid bases within a framework of respect, tolerance, and [words indistinct].

I am convinced that my presidential mandate allows me enough time to create conditions that will allow [word indistinct] our democratic process in all Guatemalans, without any sort of difference, [words indistinct].

It is essential that we set our mind to total and unrestricted support for the consolidation of democratic life, for living together, for mutual respect, respect for the law, and have faith in the potential of Guatemalans. We must also set our minds on the need to flatly reject corruption, impunity, drug trafficking, all forms of waste of our environment, and intolerance. [applause]

Fellow countrymen: The world watches us face a challenge, but most importantly, we ourselves face a challenge. At this historic juncture I call for national unity, harmony, because the community has a single purpose in mind: to correct our mistakes and walk firmly toward a better future. But listen well, this must be accomplished without a vengeful nature. To attain this, I firmly request that this organization [Congress], for the sake of national unity, find and apply the corresponding mechanisms. [applause, chants]

I reiterate: I want to repeat the paragraph that we can only advance with a firm step toward a better future if we do so without an attitude of revenge. My administration's main guideline will be to rescue the country and place it on the path of development, in step with our reality, to allow Guatemalans to enjoy a better quality of life.

I solemnly pledge to respect and ensure respect for the Republic's Constitution, with all of its guarantees and rights, but fundamentally, freedom of the press. I await your criticism to correct the errors and to redirect the paths that may have been wrongly taken. [applause] I pledge the unrestricted support to organizations in charge of ensuring that all acts by Guatemalans follow what the Constitution establishes. [words indistinct] mechanisms to ensure that violations, such as those that took place, never be allowed to be repeated in the future. I pledge to create mechanisms of consultation that will allow society to participate in decisionmaking that affects citizens' lives. I pledge to fully fight corruption and impunity, using the mechanisms that the law establishes.

The president of the Republic will be the first person to strictly adhere to ethical and moral principles, acting with openness in the handling of state affairs. I have decided to totally eliminate the confidential expense fund. [applause, cheers, chants]

Necessary measures will be taken, no matter what the cost, to ensure the security of the people and their belongings, to allow them to dedicate themselves to their activities with the assurance that they have state protection. [chants: Thank you!] [applause]

With respect to [word indistinct], discrimination, and significant poverty levels that cover a large portion of the ethnic groups, a permanent dialogue mechanism will be implemented in consultation with these ethnic groups. This will encourage government action within a framework of respect for the values and traditions of these groups. The objective of all this is to take advantage of their full potential, which will benefit them and the whole country. [applause]

Without neglecting the other government activities, health and education issues, from the human rights perspective, will be given priority status in order that more and more Guatemalans may have access to both. In this respect, I commit myself to immediately supporting a massive literacy campaign that responds to our reality [words indistinct]. [applause]

Starting with the successes achieved as relates to macroeconomic issues, which I am forced to acknowledge, we will be heading toward the integral development of society. The purpose of this is for all Guatemalans to improve their standard of living. In this respect, the

president of the Republic also faces special challenges. I am convinced that our country can improve. In this respect, I plan to present a group of measures before the appropriate organizations. These measures will propose, in an integral and coherent manner, a viable solution that will allow us to achieve the country's economic and social growth. We are all looking forward to the day when this country, rich in natural and human resources, may enjoy education, health, housing, and employment. This means that we must all commit ourselves to fighting poverty. This challenge requires enormous sacrifice, but I am sure that we will be able to make the elimination of extreme poverty a national objective.

My administration will respect and give more impulse to all international treaties and agreements, mainly those connected to Central American integration. My administration also will vigorously encourage Guatemala's incorporation into the world economy. I take advantage of the opportunity to publicly acknowledge the international community for its decided and immediate rejection of the constitutional break. This decision by the international community represented significant support during those crucial moments. [applause] I also take advantage of this opportunity to request friendly countries and international institutions to quickly reestablish technical and economic cooperation, and I urge them to increase it. [applause]

My fellow countrymen, I would like to reiterate my commitment to democracy, as well as to the prevalence of human rights issues. All of this requires institutions that are strengthened as a result of their legality, legitimacy, and credibility. In addition, there is a need for authorities and civilian leaders to be committed to and contribute to the consolidation of social peace, which [word indistinct] us to respond to the internal armed conflict that has undermined our country for the past 30 years. [applause] Taking over the presidency on this day is my contribution to the full prevalence of our Constitution, the preamble of which interprets the hopes of the Guatemalan people. Thus, I would like to share it with you by pointing out the autonomy and interrelation of the state organizations [passage indistinct].

Invoking the name of God, reaffirming the supremacy of the human being as subject and end of the social order, acknowledging the family as primary and fundamental genesis of society's spiritual and moral values, the state as responsible for promoting the common good, the consolidation of a state of legality, security, justice, equality, and peace, inspired by the tradition of our ancestors, we are committed to encouraging the full prevalence of human rights within a stable, permanent, and people-based institutional system where those who are governed and those who govern may proceed with absolute [word indistinct].

Finally, to my dear friends and colleagues of the Constituent Congress, to the president of the Association of Guatemalan Dignitaries [as heard] here present, and to all those—some of whom are no longer present here—who made it possible to decree this Constitution that is in force in Guatemala, as president of all Guatemalans as of today, and as the representative of national unity, I wish to say: Viva Guatemala! [Shouts of "Viva" and applause]

Bolivia

Election Campaign Ends; National Borders To Close 6 Jun

PY0506134893 Madrid EFE in Spanish 0411 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Text] La Paz, 5 Jun (EFE)—The campaign for presidential and congressional elections in Bolivia, which will held tomorrow, 6 June, closed at 0000 (0400 GMT) with the suspension of all political propaganda.

Through the dissemination of a "writ of good government" ["auto de buen gobierno"], the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages has been prohibited for the past 24 hours, and as of 0000 (0400 GMT) on 6 June meetings of more than three persons, the carrying of weapons, and the circulation of vehicles is also prohibited.

In addition, there will be no national flights and the country's borders will be closed throughout 6 June.

Electoral Court President: Elections 'Going Well' Overall

PY0606211893 La Paz Television Nacional Network in Spanish 1930 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Interview with National Electoral Court President Huascar Cajias by unidentified reporter from court headquarters in La Paz—live]

[Excerpt] [Reporter] We would like to know about the reports from Santa Cruz that there are many irregularities in the elections in that department.

[Cajias] Instead of irregularities such as failures or violations there were some faults and doubts. At some time some parties said—not all the parties—that it would perhaps be better to postpone the elections but the court has no power or jurisdiction to postpone any election; that is the right of the legislative authority. The court members met this morning and unanimously decided to continue with the electoral process because the majority of the voting stations were operating normally. And the political parties accepted this decision, although some of them said they were accepting it reluctantly but they accepted it. Therefore, the elections continue. Regarding what measures will be taken in the long run, we will see what happens. Some of the problems that appeared in Santa Cruz seem to also have appeared in other areas. Therefore, we ask you to contact engineer Ivan Guzman de Rojas, who can explain some of the instructions we are giving to prevent further problems and for things to go well. Let me reiterate, there is no suspension of the elections.

[Reporter] There are reports about false identification documents that may influence the elections in some way in Santa Cruz.

[Cajias] This is a report I know nothing about and that was not officially reported to us. I do not know why reports of this type are disseminated. We know nothing about such a thing.

[Reporter] Before engineer Rojas gives us some explanations, we would like you to give us an evaluation of the elections being held in the entire national territory.

[Cajias] There are obviously some problems that are creating concern among political parties, but overall we believe the elections are developing appropriately with a large turnout of citizens. It is logical to have problems that are considered more serious than they really are perhaps due to a lack of perspective. We are not going to play down some of them but we believe that, as a whole, the elections are going well and they will be a reflection of what the people want. [passage omitted]

MNR's Sanchez de Lozada Reportedly Wins Election

PY0606220893 La Paz Radio Fides Network in Spanish 2140 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Text] The winner of the general elections held in Bolivia today is Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR.

The Patriotic Accord candidate, General Hugo Banzer Suarez, came in second with about 20 percent of the votes. Third place is a very close fight between the Solidarity Civic Union, UCS, and Condepa [Conscience of the Fatherland], but most probably the UCS will win. These three parties then will go to Congress to decide who will be the new president: Gonzalez Sanchez de Lozada, Hugo Banzer Suarez, or—we put a question mark here—possibly Max Fernandez Rojas of the UCS.

Sanchez de Lozada 'Convinced' of Election Victory

PY0706003593 La Paz Radio Fides Network in Spanish 2215 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Interview with Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, presidential candidate for the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, by Radio Fides Director Eduardo Perez Iribarne in La Paz—live]

[Excerpt] [Perez] Let me present to you the winner of today's general elections, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. [applause] [Words indistinct] or are you really convinced you won the elections?

[Sanchez de Lozada] I am convinced because to make our estimates we tried to use the best technology. Our projections gave us from 36 to 39 percent of the votes, and this means 16 to 17 senators. I believe this is how it will be. I would like to congratulate you for using the technique of asking people after voting, this is called an exit poll [preceding two words in English].

[Unidentified speaker] It is called boca de urna [exit poll]; we do not accept English here.

[Sanchez de Lozada] Well, we will be multicultural then. The truth is that I congratulate you for using this technique because it is a great effort to have people making these polls throughout the country, in the provinces, in the cities. This is marvelous. I believe the results will be higher than the figures you gave, but it is clear that we are the winners. Obviously this leads us to ponder [words indistinct] and do a good government, but the main problem...

[Perez, interrupting] But the second election must be won yet.

[Sanchez de Lozada] I do not see that as a great problem because we have an overwhelming majority in Congress. In Congress we will have about 16 or 17 senators [words indistinct]. I do not believe our victory will be questioned in the election in Congress, but obviously there is the obligation to seek an agreement for a government plan, to have a solid majority in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

[Perez] I also would like to convey my congratulations to engineer Luis Alberto Quiroga Arce, general manager of Polls and Studies, a company that today graduated as the leading pollster in our country. [passage omitted]

Ballot Shortage Causes Chaos; Polls To Finish 13 Jun

PY0706021593 Madrid EFE in Spanish 0003 GMT 7 Jun 93

[Text] La Paz, 6 Jun (EFE)—The Bolivian National Electoral Court (CNE) extended voting by two hours to solve organizational problems created by the shortage of electoral material which was criticized by political parties.

The CNE decided to close the electoral registries at 2000 local time (0000 GMT) because many voting stations did not have enough ballots for people to vote.

The network of radio and television stations reported on the complaints made by people who could not vote.

Antonio Aranibar, presidential candidate for the Free Bolivia Movement, said the "organization of the elections by the CNE leaves a lot to be desired; this has tarnished the elections."

Ricardo Paz, leader of the Conscience of the Fatherland (Condepa), said the "CNE lost control of the elections, thus creating administrative mismanagement."

Paz said: "Many people did not vote because of the shortage of material." He added, this is "a serious attack against democracy."

In Potosi, people demanded their right to vote and asked the departmental Electoral Court to extend the deadline for the operation of the electoral stations.

The administrative disorganization of the elections was more obvious in Santa Cruz, the second most important electoral department in the country, where the possibility of postponing the elections for one week was considered.

The CNE decided that the voting stations that did not open until noon today will complete the voting next week. The exact number of people who will vote on 13 June is not known.

CNE member Jorge Lazarte told the press: "We never thought so many people would vote." He explained that in the last few weeks about 1 million new electorate members were registered.

He said: "For eight months we purged the list of 1.3 million voters, and in the last 20 days we had to clean up a registry of more than 1 million people."

Lazarte also said the uncertainty of the exact number of voters prevented them from sealing the ballots and sending the correct number to every electoral station.

This is one of the reasons why an Air Force airplane had to make an emergency flight to Santa Cruz carrying about 3,000 ballots while other ballots with defects were used to solve the shortage of ballots in several La Paz stations.

MNR Keeps Lead With 700,000 Votes Counted

PY0706030393 La Paz Radio Fides Network in Spanish 0252 GMT 7 Jun 93

[Text] Based on 700,000 votes counted, the MNR [Nationalist Revolutionary Movement] continues in first place with 37.6 percent, the Patriotic Accord is second with 22.2 percent, and the UCS [Solidarity Civic Union] is third with 13.2 percent.

President Hopes New Government Will Be 'More Efficient'

PY0506204993 Madrid EFE in Spanish 1451 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Report by Alejandro Varela]

[Text] La Paz, 5 Jun (EFE) — Bolivian President Jaime Paz Zamora, who will retire "to the countryside" but probably will return to politics in 1997, told EFE today that any government that emerges from the 6 June elections will follow the course that has been outlined during the past four years.

After the 6 June presidential and congressional elections, Paz Zamora will have to abandon the presidential palace in accordance with the Bolivian Constitution, which establishes that a president cannot serve two consecutive terms.

In an interview with EFE, the Bolivian president said that "it can only be hoped that the new government will be more efficient than we have been, but a change of course would come as a surprise to the entire country."

Paz Zamora believes that "up to a point it does not matter who the next president is," and he explained that the election campaign that ended on 4 June, "in addition to being evidence of the consolidation of Bolivian democracy, has demonstrated that any government that emerges from the ballot boxes will follow the same course" that the [current] cabinet has outlined during the past four years.

"Bolivia is like the bride that has been prepared very well for the wedding and it now has to marry foreign investment," he explained and stressed that "what is needed here is money."

Although Paz Zamora acknowledged that his country "continues to have many alarming indicators regarding the social situation" due to "a formidable inheritance," Paz Zamora stressed that during the four years of his government "Bolivia has become an orderly country politically and economically, and this has meant greater access to resources for the country's social development."

During the past four years "Bolivians' social situation has not become any worse than it was and in some cases has improved, such as for infant mortality and illiteracy," he added.

He also admitted that "corruption is a problem that has raised its head against Bolivian democracy," but he believes that "in the current Bolivia there are more democracy and public opinion than there is corruption."

Paz Zamora explained that "today a minister resigns when he is suspected of corruption, while in days gone by no one could make a minister resign," and he complained that "with this topic of corruption" during the election campaign "many candidates have played Russian roulette, in other words, you shoot 10 times but you only hit once, but no one takes you to task regarding the nine times that you do not hit."

According to the president, drug trafficking is no longer a danger to Bolivia's democracy and economy, and he also predicts that there will be a reduction in U.S. aid for the fight against this scourge "from which we can come out winning because we were strongly tied to the United States" through its aid for the fight against drug trafficking.

Regarding foreign policy, Paz Zamora believes Bolivia has no rush in renewing diplomatic relations with Chile, and he considers that "for the time being it would not be very opportune to take that step."

He highlighted Bolivia's relations with Spain that, according to him, for the past four years have become a relation "of state to state" above and beyond Paz Zamora's friendship with Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez and the ideological affinity between their two parties.

Paz Zamora has governed Bolivia since 1989 with a pact between his party, the social-democratic Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and the rightist Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN), headed by General Hugo Banzer, who is the presidential candidate for the Patriotic Alliance (AP) that is made up of the two parties.

Notwithstanding, Paz Zamora told EFE that he will not feel "responsible" for Banzer's management of the country if the general wins the elections because, he explained, "I am going to support him, but I am not going to participate" in a future AP government.

Regarding his party, Paz Zamora expressed his hope that "the MIR will be a fundamental part of the process of restructuring the Bolivian political system," and he added that "it can be a valid electoral alternative in 1997."

Regarding his own future, the Bolivian president stated that he plans to retire "to the countryside deep inside Bolivia, to then go away for a time to return to my European sources, visit the United States to get to know the new Clinton administration, and then return to participate and see how I can contribute to the modernization of my country."

Venezuela

Congress Session Begins, Vote Expected

PA0406214193 Caracas Radio Caracas Radio Network in Spanish 2100 GMT 4 Jun 93

[Text] Today is D-day, a crucial day, the day when the new president of Venezuela will be elected. He will supposedly govern for the remaining constitutional period that corresponded to President Carlos Andres Perez. I say corresponded in case something unexpected happens, as somebody once said.

In any event, the situation now is that a congressional session has begun. The session should last until approximately 2300 [0300 GMT] this evening, then a voting period of approximately two hours will begin. It is believed that by 2300 or 2400 hours tonight, Congress will have made a decision. Once Ramon J. Velasquez is elected, he may be sworn-in as president of Venezuela on 8 June.

Congress Expected To Name Velasquez President

PA0406184393 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 1550 GMT 4 Jun 93

[Text] At 1600 [2000 GMT] on 4 June, a joint session of Congress will choose the Venezuelan who, in line with the Constitution, will fill the post left vacant by the suspension of Carlos Andres Perez.

The consensus is that historian Ramon J. Velasquez will be selected. Velasquez has held several meetings with the country's political leadership to inform them of what he plans to do as president. The new president has also held talks with minority groups at the legislative palace. Political factions of the People's Electoral Movement,

the Communist Party of Venezuela, and Formula One [Formula Uno], among others, told Velasquez their positions on the country's problems. They also gave him their opinion on him getting special powers for his mandate.

Velasquez also received a group of regional leaders at the Interior Ministry to listen to the priorities the governors of Carabobo, Apure, Delta Amacuro, Cojedes, and Lara believe he should follow regarding decentralization. Velasquez said the delivery of documents signed in Carabobo, Barquisimeto, and Casa de la Estrella was a positive sign. Thus consultations, which will be the basis of his administration, have already begun.

Velasquez said regional leaders need to participate in his administration because a union of Venezuelan states must be formed.

Asked about the possibility of governing with special powers, Velasquez told local and foreign reporters that he will not request such powers without consulting the parties first.

In a meeting with reporters, Velasquez stressed that he will form permanent consultative councils and establish direct contact with the presidential candidates of the Social Christian Party, the Movement Toward Socialism, the Radical Cause Party, and Democratic Action.

[Begin Velasquez recording] I am not a know-it-all. I am an ignorant person who appeals to the knowledge and good faith of those who do know. Thus, I am going to summon national experts in fiscal matters, along with the people who are in government, to assess the situation. Based on that, I will take measures, taking into consideration the team I am trying to form with the finance minister, the coordination and planning minister, and a special consultative council. [end recording]

Defense Minister Comments on Velasquez' Nomination

PA0406190193 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 2350 GMT 2 Jun 93

[Text] The Armed Forces believe the appointment of Senator Ramon J. Velasquez as a substitute president during the absence of the incumbent is a good choice, Defense Minister General Ivan Dario Jimenez Sanchez has announced. After reporting that 130 colonels, 19 brigadier generals, and six division generals will be promoted, the defense minister added that if parliament selects Senator Ramon J. Velasquez to occupy the presidency, the Armed Forces would agree with that choice.

[Begin Jimenez Sanchez recording] He is a man of great experience; he is known for his honesty. We, the Armed Forces, know him very well because he was a member of the Defense Commission for many years, as well as from other work we have done in recent years along the border. [end recording]

Acting President Lepage Addresses Nation

PA0506013993 Caracas Radio and Television Networks in Spanish 0016 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Speech by Acting President Octavio Lepage from Miraflores Palace—live]

[Text] Fellow countrymen: This afternoon the National Congress made a decision of unquestionable historical impact. It will elect a new president, who will be sworn in on 5 June to govern with full powers until the current constitutional term ends in February 1994. I will return to being president of Congress.

You know that I did not take over the presidency out of personal ambition or as a result of political partisan manipulations. I took office as a result of an express and unavoidable constitutional mandate.

You, my fellow Venezuelans, witnessed the unjustified attacks and criticism to which I was subjected, although I was only doing my constitutional duty. An attempt was also made to disqualify me as a person and as a political leader. I am firmly convinced that the real and hidden reason for that unexpected and unfounded aggression is an interest in keeping the country in a permanent state of hot confrontation. A suitable phrase for this situation is: incredible but true.

Some people have based their actions on personal and momentary political convenience in an attempt to overlook the profound damage this exaggerated and permanent pugnaciousness is doing to Venezuela. Those behind the strategy of unrelenting confrontation are mistaken, as are the professionals of violence. I have been able to see this clearly from the exceptional vantage point that is Miraflores Palace. The Venezuelan people want tranquillity, harmonious coexistence, security for persons and property, and opportunities for work and continuous improvement through honest and fruitful effort. This has been proven over the past few weeks. Catastrophic predictions were made; there were expectations—stated with poorly disguised glee—of endless days of nationwide street violence. These predictions completely collapsed, despite the upheaval that might have been caused by something that seemed impossible in Venezuela: the trial and forced removal of a president.

Tonight it gives me immense satisfaction to say that on 5 June, I will turn over to my successor a country that is in peace. Venezuelan society's resolve for peace has been accurately interpreted by the nation's leading parties. Perhaps sacrificing personal preferences, their leaders have agreed to appoint Senator Ramon Velasquez as the new president. Senator Velasquez—I can assure you—is an illustrious Venezuelan fully entitled to the support and respect of all Venezuelans, regardless of political position or partisan limitations.

The illustrious senator from Tachira has the human, intellectual, moral, and political capabilities to unify the country solidly during the difficult transition that must

take place over the next few months. I trust that with the support and active backing of the entire country, he will be able to neutralize the threats of turbulence that will surely appear on the political horizon.

Before returning to the legislative realm, in which I feel comfortable although dissatisfied with our output, I must share a few personal concerns with my fellow Venezuelans. I consider these concerns pertinent because of the difficult moment Venezuela is experiencing, which precludes traditional touch ups and readjustments.

What is required is much more demanding. We must speak with absolute clarity, without deception, seeking a collective awareness. I am not speaking as acting president, senator, or professional politician. I am speaking as a Venezuelan, as a man over 60 who has devoted a lifetime to serving his country. I want to speak to you as a member of a family of 20 million Venezuelans, to which all of you and I belong.

The time to stop lying to the Venezuelan people, to cast off the false values and false beliefs of the past, and to face today's harsh reality is long overdue. Venezuela is immersed in a serious crisis, brought about by infinite causes. So far, however, instead of accepting this reality without touch ups or imitations, we have been seeking culprits. We could waste our lives along such a path, never climbing out of the hole.

We have given ourselves the political system and the country model we desired. For years we all enjoyed an easy standard of living, based on high revenues from an oil boom. We got used to a mirage of unlimited riches. This oil boom failed because real and nominal oil prices have dropped in the past 20 years. You know it, because you are still reeling from the consequences of this failure. We have been unable to diversify the country's sources of wealth. This has been aggravated by the fact that the Venezuelan population grew during this period by more than 60 percent.

In addition to the oil boom, the centralist, state-oriented, revenue-based, and populist model on which Venezuela's democratic system is based has failed. The unwritten social pact governing relations between political parties and Venezuelan society has become dangerously weak.

This reality can be checked. Whomever disregards it has nothing else to look forward to. He will be cast aside by the country's unstoppable march forward. Venezuela must undergo a fundamental political, economic, and social change. The December elections offer an opportunity for a nontraumatic change. Without a doubt, these elections are the most important ones in Venezuelan history. I urge you, my fellow citizens, to participate actively in the electoral process. It is extremely important for you to study the four candidates and their electoral platforms, keeping in mind that all four have already been tested regionally, nationally, and locally as government officials, public managers, and administrators.

It is necessary that the four candidates give specific answers and solutions to specific problems, some of which are very complex and grave, problems that are burdening the country.

Do not be tolerant of demagoguery, populism, or cronyism. In these elections, we Venezuelans must try to establish who is being truthful and who can be the motor of the fundamental changes we require as a nation and as a society.

My brief presence in Miraflores as acting president has reaffirmed my conviction that Venezuelans cannot continue being governed with the traditional style and viewpoint.

The days of sectarianism, of excluding party positions, are over. No party can hold total power alone based on an electoral victory; power must be shared. What would best suit Venezuela is a government of national unity and understanding in any of its forms. This is the only way it will be possible to create the political force necessary to face a series of very serious problems whose solutions can no longer be postponed.

Venezuela is a democracy. The Venezuelan people have the strength and courage to make this bruised democracy march forward as it should. The Venezuelan people have the creativity and capability to reach higher levels of economic development as a country and as a nation.

The Venezuelan people have the strength and will to demand and secure the social justice that everybody deserves. The Venezuelan people are transforming Venezuela, and Venezuela is all its people, not just the political parties.

Venezuela will prevail as a democracy. The economic, political, and social reforms that the country requires will be successful because the Venezuelan people want them to be.

Our current problems and difficulties are temporary. By uniting to face them, we will satisfactorily resolve them. Let us be trustworthy. Let us get ready to struggle and to work without wasting any time or energy in nonproductive disputes. We must forget the old ways of politicking.

Good night, fellow countrymen!

Congress Elects Velasquez New Acting President

PA0506055293 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Networks in Spanish 0505 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Statement by Senator Edgar Flores on results of congressional election of Venezuelan acting president at the National Congress building in Caracas—live]

[Text] Mr. President, fellow congressmen. The result of the vote count is as follows: for Senator Ramon J. Velasquez, 205 votes [applause]; for Deputy Reinaldo Cervini, 11 votes [applause]; 13 blank votes; six null votes; and one that reads: reserved.

[Acting Congress President Luis Enrique Oberto] Having counted the votes and disclosed the results of the election held by the legislative chambers, in accordance with Articles 187 and 188 of the Constitution of the Republic, and in accordance with Congress' internal and debate regulations as they pertain to secret voting, as acting president of Congress, I proclaim Dr. Ramon J. Velasquez Mujica the elected president of the Republic. [applause]

Congress President Delivers Address at Oath Ceremony

PA0606010893 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 2031 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Speech by Congress President Luis Enrique Oberto at the ceremony to swear in Ramon J. Velasquez as president; at the National Congress in Caracas—live]

[Text] Dr. Ramon Jose Velasquez Mujica, president of the republic elected by the National Congress; Mr. Acting President of the Senate; Mr. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; Mr. Prosecutor General of the Republic; Madame President of the Judiciary Council; Senator Wolfgang Larrazabal, former president of the Government Junta; Mr. Comptroller General of the Republic; Mr. Representative of the Cardinal and of the Venezuelan Catholic Church; Messrs governors of federal agencies; Mssrs. Ambassadors and other representatives of friendly countries; Mssrs. Representatives of national academies and other medium-level institutions and associations; Mssrs. Senators and Deputies; Friends of the Venezuelan press and other media; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Once again, in the present five-year constitutional period, the legislative chambers have come to do their duty, pursuant to the law and in response to the appeal of the citizenry. On this occasion, they are here to confer the attributes of president of the Republic upon the Venezuelan elected by the legislative chambers under Articles 187 and 188 of the Constitution to fill the vacancy created by the suspension of the president from his functions.

As acting president of the Congress of the Republic, in the short period of 15 days—for the good of the homeland, and with the strictest adherence to the prevailing constitutional order—I have had the highest honor of swearing in two prominent Venezuelans and investing them with the attributes of the Presidency of the Republic. For this, I give thanks to God.

The swearing in and investiture of Dr. Ramon Jose Velasquez as president of the republic culminates the process prescribed by law which began in the Senate on the afternoon of 21 May, when the Supreme Court of Justice was authorized to proceed to bring the president of the Republic to trial. Dr. Velasquez fully meets the requirements that the peoples' representatives, after profound reflection, established as the necessary profile of the Venezuelan who is to receive the responsibility of leading the republic in the months to come. He will be responsible for calling on the people to make a united effort to return tranquility to the local community, to put aside hatred, and to overcome the obstacles in the way of the fulfillment of their social aspirations, political change, and the sustained economic development of the Venezuelan nation.

The country is aware of his concern with national events and his vocation to serve, demonstrated on every occasion on which he has been called upon to take up responsibilities linked to the common good. His experience, as gained from his dedication to the study and investigation of our history and from the exercise of a broad range of responsibilities ranging from his membership in several national academies to a ministerial post, and as revealed by the awards and distinctions he has received, will be of great use in this difficult, but beautiful moment for the homeland.

This ceremony is taking place openly before the country, with the citizens being informed directly, as I believe should be done with all of our legislative sessions. I have fought for this unfalteringly day after day, faced with the incomprehension of those who, being in a position to bring this about, have not been predisposed to changes and modernization of the letter and practice of parliamentary procedure.

Today, you assume the functions of president of the republic. You are a man familiar with the history of the homeland, accustomed to analyzing the present and to judging the future from the viewpoint of the actions, experiences, and changes that have occurred in our history at different times, in both similar and different circumstances.

Within the cooperation that must exist among the branches of public power to achieve the state's objectives, and with a view to making a reality the right of all citizens to be able to be informed directly of the work of their representatives in the legislative houses, as occurs in democratic regimes that pride themselves on being so, and as has been occurring for so many years in the majority of developed countries, on behalf of the Congress and especially the House of Deputies, which already has pronounced itself unanimously in the plenary session on this particular matter, in my new role, I request its cooperation in this respect.

The coming days must serve to correct and pave roads in order to solve the problems that citizens demand be solved. You have said: Today, president-elect by the Congress, in press publications on 4 June, which is not bad. This phrase translates your aspiration to make clear in our community that no one must expect magic solutions, although it is necessary to expect dedication and perseverance in overcoming our difficulties. This statement, made with laudable sincerity, reflects your actions on a daily basis, in relation to the fact that there is no magic wand with which problems can be solved overnight. I have shared with you the executive government team and I have seen you act, publicly and privately, in varied circumstances. In this light, therefore, I believe

that at the head of the government you can make this the timely moment to make rectifications and to walk on new paths. This will permit a review and a readjustment of policies and measures applied, leaving behind prejudices and dogmatisms, allowing us to start thinking of the people of today and tomorrow, in which the future is becoming evermore present, and which is conditioned by our daily actions and omissions.

Among the attributes and powers of the president, Paragraph 8 of Article 190 of the Constitution establishes the power of ordering extraordinary measures in economic or financial matters, whenever public interest so warrants, and after it has been properly authorized by special law. There have been many statements made in favor of providing the new government with such a law. No less important have been voices demanding more specifics or voices entertaining doubts about the advisability of such a law. Very few have drawn attention to the fact that this request should stem from the new government, once it is established and its orientations, priorities, and its real objectives are determined in this respect. On this matter, President Velasquez expressed himself clearly, bringing to an end an unnecessarily anticipated debate.

On this opportunity, I do not intend to get involved in this debate. I do wish to avail myself of the opportunity to stress an important fact: In one case or another, the majority of those who have stated their opinion seemingly have considered this law from their own angle. They have not considered what the Congress can approve within the legislative program, which is set out to be fulfilled this year. They have not made a real assessment of what is sought and what can be approved. It has been a discussion among those who think the Congress has been making an effort to move ahead, although many have not realized it, and those who think that it can accomplish nothing. This, however, is not the issue at hand; it would be a sheer waste of time. What is important, what I wish to stress on this very special afternoon, when I know the president, who is accustomed to listening, can hear me, is that at the time of considering the possibility of making a request to the Congress, it should be considered if one wants to move toward finding a solution to any one of several problems affecting the citizens. At the moment of defining the topics to be included in the request, rather than looking at what is in the process of being considered in the Congress, a glance should be cast at what has not been submitted by the Executive Branch for consideration by the Legislative Branch during the constitutional five-year term.

I am certain that from this viewpoint, it will be easy to find a path toward fruitful cooperation.

It is impossible for me to fail to mention, even if only briefly, the constitutional amendment approved by the Chamber of Deputies which is pending a second debate in the Senate. I feel that from every viewpoint, its passage within a short time will be beneficial to the national community. To leave that decision until the next five-year period might imply passing on to the next administration the disquiet that currently prevails and the discontent that is continuously noted because of the delay in resolving situations that cannot be resolved or placed on the path to resolution without the constitutional amendment, without the modernization or renovation of the present republican institutions. For this reason, I insist—and in this regard, the new government can play an important role—that it would be well worth our while to jointly reflect thoroughly on this matter in a search for the indispensable national convergence. This could come from an open willingness to review the scope and content of the amendment in order to ensure the basic changes that are urgently needed in the organization of the Venezuelan state. Without the constitutional amendment, it is highly unlikely that these changes will come about.

You, Mr. President, with your extensive political experience, can contribute to an understanding of the need for this amendment and the advisability of its immediate passage. You can help to spark within the national leadership the enthusiasm to support it now, and within the hearts of the citizens, the determination to demand that it be debated and approved.

Mr. President, Senators, Comrade Deputies: Within a few hours, since the legislative chambers have fulfilled their duties within the process that has culminated with your election as president of the Republic, we parliamentarians again will devote all our time to the legislative program established for this period. Mr. President, you have been a student of our history, a researcher into the actions and events that will determine our future. It is now time for you to add to your actions those higher duties corresponding to the Presidency of the Republic. It is now your time to truly make history. I pray to God that the stage you are beginning now, even though it can be counted only in terms of months, will become a crowning glory to your achievements, the most important stage in your life for the good and happiness of all.

I invite citizen Dr. Ramon Jose Velasquez Mujica to take his oath of office. [applause]

Velasquez Delivers Oath of Office Address

PA0606000993 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 2049 GMT 5 Jun 93

[Speech by President Ramon Jose Velasquez Mujica at his swearing-in ceremony at the Congress in Caracas—live]

[Text] Mr. Acting President of the Congress of the Republic; Mr. Acting President of the Senate of the Republic; Mr. Chief Justice and other members of the Supreme Court of Justice; Mr. Prosecutor General of the Republic; Drs. Rafael Caldera and Luis Herrera Campins, former presidents of the Republic; Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal, former president of the Government Junta; Madame President of the Judiciary Council; Mr. Comptroller General of the Republic; Your Excellencies, the

auxiliary bishops of the Diocese of Caracas; Your Most Excellent and Reverend Monsignor Apostolic Papal Nuncio, dean of the diplomatic corps; Your Most Excellent Messrs Ambassadors and Honorable Charges d'Affaires of friendly countries, representatives of international organizations, Senators and Deputies of the Congress of the Republic; state governors; presidents and directors of national academies; members of the Council of the Order of the Liberator; representatives of the media; distinguished special guests; Ladies and Gentlemen:

My first words, outside of protocol, are for my colleagues in the Congress, all those who on 4 June, in an unforgettable historic debate, conferred upon me the highest national duty. I can only respond to the task assigned to me by my parliamentary colleagues with the promise to try at all times to be worthy of the confidence placed in me. I may make mistakes, I may fail in my endeavors, I may prove to be inferior to the task you have assigned me at such a conflictive moment for Venezuela, but you can rest assured, however, that I will never disappoint you ethically. [applause]

I did not seek this distinction. I thought for a long time before accepting this historic challenge, but in view of the serious times the country is experiencing, I will not shy away from the assignment. Moreover, and I declare this emphatically, on this occasion, there was no incident of shameful pacts or the surrender of dignity in exchange for an honor. [applause]

As for the configuration of the government and the paths to be followed, there were no agreements that might secretly restrict my actions or that surrendered any part of the responsibility that is, and should be, the attribute of the head of state. The representatives of Democratic Action [AD] and the Social Christian Party [Copei] emphatically expressed their decision that their members should not line up to be included in the future cabinet in which the president may or may not request the participation of some person identified with their respective parties. [applause] They also expressed their interest in having this government that is inaugurated today enjoy the support and cooperation of personages and sectors identified with the democratic system. They also advocated a study of possible corrections of past measures that might be advisable in the present situation. In a word, in offering parliamentary and political support for this government, they acknowledged that full presidential dignity is a prerequisite for success in the task ahead. This is a statement I feel must be made at this time, so as to indicate the true characteristics of my candidacy.

A single objective was pursued in this manner of responding to the presidential problem: to promote a government that, on assuming its responsibilities, would be able to call on the country to ensure that firm steps would be taken in the path toward the upcoming month of December, when the electoral vote will eliminate causes of conflict and a new chapter will be opened in the history of Venezuelan democracy.

I am fully aware of the limits and risks of the task I am undertaking. I understand the urgency and correctness with which many sectors of the nation are demanding the state's presence and action at the same time that it is experiencing a multifaceted crisis, among which we must mention serious fiscal difficulties. This forces us not to make promises that will be impossible to keep later. I prefer to act before making offers. I prefer to be judged more for my work than for my promises.

I repeat, I am fully aware of the singular characteristics of this mission, which are to preside over the last phase of the government that was elected by an immense majority in the elections of December of 1988, which led to the victory as president of Mr. Carlos Andres Perez, [applause] while simultaneously trying to make this government become a transition phase toward the December 1993 elections, when their indisputable results will open the path for a new national scenario.

The way to ensure the beginning of this new phase in Venezuelan life is none other than to rid democracy of risks. The government must be a fundamental factor in this endeavor, without meddling in the electoral process that has started already. It must, however, become a venue for understanding, striving to restore the spiritual unity of Venezuelans which has been so shattered by the fierce political struggle in which we have been involved in the past few years.

Many of the factors of the crisis that today create a panorama of growing difficulties and permanent questions are our responsibility in a situation of imbalances that, caused by the harmful impact of the foreign debt, now are shaking all the Latin American nations. The statement by a Japanese gentleman—that history ended with the disappearance of the Berlin Wall and the USSR—does not apply to our continent. So far in this century, Latin American societies have never suffered from shake-ups like the ones caused by the abrupt changes that established the role and obligation of debtor countries in their lives. These imbalances have tested the strength of democracies and their capacities to give answers that provide solutions and breakthroughs. In our case, the nation's growth in all fields under the guiding light of our oil wealth seemed to have put the country on the sidelines of any fluctuation up until the time that the combination of all sorts of factors, namely, the progressive and growing indebtedness, accumulation of the majority of the population in the capital city and cities in the country's central area, inequalities in the distribution of the new wealth, corruption, administrative squandering, and leniency in the face of crime opened the door to a situation that now has become permanent instability.

Our young democracy undoubtedly is wounded by this state of affairs. In the midst of mistakes, clear achievements, and very serious errors, democracy in Venezuela gradually has changed, over the past 40 years, the habits

and conduct of a people who have suffered more than 100 years of successive dictatorial, regionalist, cruel, and rapacious military regimes.

Of all the important Latin American countries, Venezuela is the one that arrived latest to its date with democracy. We have had true democracy for only 34 years, without forgetting two administrations of this century that opened the road to a life where liberties prevail.

The most positive transformations of Venezuelan society have occurred during these 34 years. During this period, majority sectors have joined the struggle for social equilibrium so that democracy would cease to be just a word that serves electoral purposes, but a way of life for today's Venezuelans.

Venezuelans have learned how to recognize those who commit abuses, monopolize, exploit others, and steal in the name of democracy and of all that represents democracy as a national way of life.

Successive critical episodes definitely have tested the system's ability to prevail. It has been demonstrated that political, economic, and social changes can take place without our accomplishments being destroyed and without needed rectifications producing acts of violence.

There is a troubling fiscal and economic situation resulting from payments made to serve the foreign debt, as well as from wasteful habits. Venezuela is going through the traumatic phase through which all development and transformation crises have gone.

During the past 30 years, new power factors and new social forces have emerged. They have become aware of their political might. The iron molds that in 1959 allowed Venezuela to take the road that today permits the country to confront and resolve its successive crises, have been conquered. This allows Venezuela to demand a new national agreement, a 21st century agreement, as a condition for reaching political and social peace. [applause]

One sign of the vitality of Venezuela's democratic system is the emergence of the aforementioned social forces and of a new national leadership fixed on studying and resolving the social problems that have destabilized and almost destroyed thousands of Venezuelans.

The language used by this new social leadership is different from political rhetoric. It speaks of solutions that do not necessarily have to do with the national budget.

The same occurs with new regional leaders. As the economy of the states is strengthened, as regional universities consolidate their influence, elite leaderships emerge and give innovative solutions to local problems based on analyses and experience. The growing influence of state governors results from the emergence of a new Venezuela, which in a few years, gained its adulthood.

Political parties will not disappear as a result of the forthcoming change because they are irreplaceable tools, the only tools that democracies have had throughout the world to carve society's political path. [applause] All the political parties have to do is reduce their traditional influence. They have to yield clout, just as the big organizations that used to represent the totality of the national economy have to acknowledge now that there are other, new production factors that represent the various interests of an economy that is being diversified.

It will be up to the next administration, chosen in accordance with the people's will as expressed in the December elections, to be a decisive and fundamental element of this new national agreement. It is worthwhile to repeat that a very significant part of the national restlessness originates in the demands for organized participation in this new reality that has matured spontaneously as a result of the development of democracy itself. Likewise, it also will be up to the next government to confront the administrative reform issue in every sense of the word. Evaluations of the issue are already practically complete. Numerous calls for a new, reduced state demand that these reforms confront any obstacle to its complete fulfillment. The new administration also must confront such issues as military structure reform, and a reordering of the country's international policies, as well as finding some kind of common ground between economic development and social justice. [applause]

During the next few months that will lead us closer to the election month of December, the country is obligated to raise the quality of the electoral debates. We must abandon useless personal hostility and make way for productive debates on the new blueprint of a Venezuela determined to overcome conflicts in order to reaffirm its destiny.

In addition to carrying out the task of concluding the term for which Carlos Andres Perez was elected president of the republic, the government over which I am about to preside will try to take the new social realities into account in its everyday obligations. We plan to do this through permanent consultation among personalities and organizations that will provide a voice for that new Venezuelan world. In addition, the permanent consultation will allow us to establish close relations with the state governors and presidential candidates. We believe this will be useful, and to a certain extent necessary.

I will address the nation on the economic, fiscal, and financial problems after I have obtained a detailed report on the situation from those who manage the issues. As I have always known, as I have repeated in public time and again—and those who promoted my candidacy are well aware of this—I am not an expert on these issues, and I plan to resort to those who are more knowledgeable and are endowed with a sense of Venezuelan honesty. In order to obtain the continuing advice of those who are experts on the country's fundamental problems, I plan to establish several consultive councils.

I find myself in the predicament that, owing to personality conflicts, well-known Venezuelan public figures have decided to decline any appointment at the ministerial level. I suppose, then, that they will be willing to provide their expertise through the consultive councils on an ad-hoc basis.

I plan to establish permanent councils of economy and finance. I believe that since we are dealing with a very short period of time and are not anticipating any more obstacles, other than the one I just announced, they will not resign from their normal activities. Since we are dealing with ad-hoc positions, I believe I will be able to convince some outstanding Venezuelans to spend a few hours of each week working for the country's benefit.

Likewise, as of now, I hereby announce the creation of the social consultive council, to which I grant priority status owing to the magnitude of the country's social imbalances as the basis for serious conflicts, as well as because of the attention that must be granted to those organizations that undertake tremendous efforts in their search for practical solutions to the country's problems.

Logically, on international issues this government will maintain zealously the obligations assumed by the state. Considering the brevity of its mandate, decisions that are fundamental—such as those related to dealing with complex problems with neighboring countries—will be delegated to the next administration. I also will ask the Foreign Affairs Advisory Commission, where the most diverse positions and viewpoints related to foreign policy are taken, to contribute its viewpoints on all topics in order to pave the way for the fundamental decisions the state must adopt in the coming years.

The Armed Forces have been an essential factor for the development of the democratic system and have demonstrated their firm commitment to the institutionality of the country. As commander in chief of the Armed Forces, I will maintain with the Armed Forces the relationship prescribed by the institutional and legal provisions because I have its support and solidarity.

I just want to recognize the Catholic Church, which has become an essential factor of democratic understanding throughout this crisis. It has taken the social problem as its own, making the most useful contributions.

Fellow citizens, I am a man who hails from the provinces and have never ceased to be. My participation in the national life of the country has never been at the cost of forsaking my roots as a native of Tachira. I know what the provinces feel and have fought to preserve their rights and defend their achievements. Within the framework of decentralization, which I was charged with initiating as the first president of the commission for state reform and as one of the proponents of the law for the direct election of governors, I propose to be a permanent interlocutor of that vast region, which has been neglected by so many decades of centralism.

It is indispensable, gentlemen, to return to a normal and healthy institutional life. The country cannot continue to live from turmoil to turmoil. The citizens cannot be subject to endless, extenuated, recurrent crises. I invite the diverse sectors of society to resume the spirit of solidarity that has vanished in the midst of threats, rumors, and dramatic processes. Let us gain awareness of the extremely difficult moment we face and let us make an effort to set aside accumulated hate and partial interests to make a stable, optimistic country, filled with confidence and capable of getting on the path of its most intense modernization.

Expressly, I do not wish to make specific declarations on this solemn opportunity. I am convinced that the people do not want and cannot tolerate more promises, but want only solutions to our ills. In the coming days I will announce the decisions that must be adopted, after the appropriate assessments are made. My government will not be a factory of miracles, but I will do everything possible, and more, to solve the questions that beset all of Venezuela.

Fellow citizens, just as I have responded to Venezuela, accepting an immense responsibility that I did not seek, I beseech Venezuela to accompany me in this difficult task. Good evening. [applause]

President Velasquez Interviewed on Outlook

PA0706055993 Caracas Radio Caracas Television Network in Spanish 0156 GMT 7 Jun 93

[Interview with Acting Venezuelan President Ramon J. Velasquez by Marcel Granier, at Miraflores Palace in Caracas—live or recorded]

[Text] [Granier] Dr. Velasquez has just experienced an extraordinary process. The Venezuelan people can feel very proud of several things that have been accomplished throughout our history, one of them being this episode that culminates with your appointment as president of the Republic. In the past few months we have seen changes take place within important institutions, such as the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Congress, and the Presidency. As we have seen in the past two weeks, all of these changes have taken place according to the law, very reasonable, sensibly, and with good judgment. However, everyone agrees that the office that you just accepted is the most difficult for any Venezuelan at this moment, and probably for any Venezuelan in this century. What led you to accept the presidency of the Republic at a time like this?

[Velasquez] Good evening, Marcel. I was led to accept this position of high risk and great honor by my experience of Venezuela's historic life and my will to serve. This question gives me the opportunity to tell the nation that I did not seek this honor. When Democratic Action [AD] and the Social Christian Party [Copei] asked me to be their candidate, I told them what I thought and asked them to think about the whole thing.

What did I think? I felt that, in light of the characteristics of the crisis, the man who held the office had to be a Venezuelan who, in addition to his knowledge of history and an unblemished personal and work record, had to be an expert in specific areas. I cautioned them that the man who filled the post should be someone who, because of his age, could do the job as it should be done at this time; a man who could work long hours; a broad-minded man; a man who could make quick decisions.

My inclination toward research, my humanistic discipline, where doubt and thought are developed, could be helpful because I believe that a head of state must be informed and must ask question, however, the responsibility of making decisions falls only on him. I was given other reasons and I saw that among those reasons there was one in particular that worried me, worried me [repeats himself]. It worried me to see that prominent persons, not only those we have been hearing about, all had a different excuse to turn down the jobs.

Why? They did not want the job. They were quite aware of the huge dimensions of the crisis. They wanted the country to be saved and they wanted democracy to be free of risks, however, they had commitments with their clients, with foreign universities, with their own wishes of not meddling in these matters, thus, avoiding becoming fodder for the press. Many of the men approached have amassed fortunes in an honorable fashion and they did not want anyone to say that what they had earned was the result of their days as a public official. That fear, which must be respected, kept reducing the number of people who would even think about the possibility of being a candidate.

I am a man with no future political plans. A month and a half ago some people from my region, Tachira State—AD Regional Secretary General Orlando Carrero and an independent group—came to ask me to head the list of senators for Tachira State. I told them then that my duty was to retire and give the rising figures, those who have forged a political life for themselves in the past 30 years, an opportunity to defend the region and the interests of their state in the Congress. I told them that my contribution on this occasion would be to give them the space that they needed. That was my position, and is my current position.

I have no political, much less partisan plans for the future. Therefore, I accepted for two reasons: First, because of my responsibility with my country and with democracy; and second, because Luis Alfaro Ucero, Jose Curiel, Pedro Paris Montesinos, and Hilarion Cardozo, told me that the two parties did not wish to participate in this government. The two parties are planning to participate in the upcoming electoral campaign. Furthermore, they did not want any member of the parties in the cabinet or any other high-ranking government position. They added that if I thought it was convenient, I could choose an independent who supported one or the other party. However, as far as the path to take and the integration of the cabinet, they had decided not to participate. They do not wish to be considered for cabinet posts or any high-ranking government post.

[Granier] This creates quite an uncomfortable situation for you, Mr. President, because...

[Velasquez, interrupting] No, I want to finish.

[Granier] Forgive me.

[Velasquez] The two parties gave me their support in Congress; they also gave me their political support to keep the government from being orphaned, or as the editorial in EL DIARIO DE CARACAS says, from having a martyr president. I put all those cards on the table and that is the burden that the man who holds this office must carry. But, the Congress has offered its support in any decision that is made. The same support was offered for any political actions carried out.

[Granier] You have already answered part of the question I was going to ask. It is an uncomfortable situation to have AD and Copei say that they will not participate in the government, however, they control the Legislative Branch. There are important decisions the Executive Branch must make for the country to march along and they, unfortunately, have their hands into a large portion of the Judicial Branch. How can they say that they do not want to be part of the government yet they continue to control a large part of two of the three branches of state?

[Velasquez] There is a new factor in Venezuelan political life: the crisis. The crisis is putting sectarianism in a corner. Either one realizes the extent of the stormy crisis, or as I said yesterday, we may be swept away by the storm. The crisis factor must open understanding so that each group—political parties, economic forces, and the media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, which today are a (?gigantic) political force—reach a national agreement.

The December elections are only five months away. There is nothing new in the picture that would do away with the bipartite system. There are four candidates that we have heard about and they create a new national possibility. We have AD and Copei but there are two other obvious forces: calderism—which includes important groups and has presented a platform—and the Radical Cause Party under the leadership of Andres Velasquez, which represents a very important factor. In addition to having been born from the ranks of Bolivar State's union groups, the state where most of our industries are located and the state with the largest unions, the Radical Cause Party has had its victories, such as winning the Caracas mayorship and its presence within the unions in the central states. They could come up with a national figure that could compete in the upcoming elections.

Within the existent picture, the Venezuelan people have an alternative. The country will decide, and once the country decides, it will open a new chapter in Venezuela's history. The style and ideas will change no matter

who the winner is and the integration of the national political picture will also change. Then why can't we reach an agreement, between now and December, and have each of us give up some of our legitimate interests and picture December as the key that will unlock the doors or the light at the end of the tunnel in which we are traveling. That is my opinion.

[Granier] In your talks with the political parties, talks that led you to accept this position, what support did they offer? They said that you can count on them in the Congress. What does that mean? What did the political parties promise the president?

[Velasquez] They promised to back, with their votes, all of matters pertaining to laws. Naturally, these matters will be discussed and defended in the Congress. They also promised to cooperate with the government, and this is very important.

These are the last months of the government chosen in December 1988, when a majority voted for Carlos Andres Perez and elected him president. This government, and this is where support becomes important, must make itself known as a transition government. In other words, this government must talk with the people, with the organizations—not an unending dialogue—not one of those dialogues that would make people say that we are spending all our time talking. It is important and indispensable for the people to speak through their organizations and tell us how they view the problem and how they believe they can help solve it.

[Granier] In that sense, the Catholic Church has been making an important contribution. I have seen that you are bent on strengthening relations with the Church. I understand that the first event you attended was the 5 June Thanksgiving Mass. You have also talked with members of the Church.

[Velasquez] Yes.

[Granier] Recently, and interpreting the feelings of the people, the Catholic Church sponsored national understanding campaigns during which prominent Venezuelans, well known in the fields of political and economic science, participated and offered solutions to the various problems in the country. The campaign sought to pinpoint those areas of agreement and disagreement. Perhaps those issues will have to be solved during an election. My question is: What will be your priorities? You have talked to us about the need to lead the country to elections in December. You have said that you hope that in the next six months the Venezuelan people will have enough intelligence and common sense to find what unites us and rally around these issues. You have also said that you have two limitations: On the one hand, this government is the end of a government that was sworn in in February 1989, therefore, we cannot expect spectacular changes in the presidential policies....

[Velasquez, interrupting] Miracles.

[Granier] On the other hand, this government must find the areas of agreement that unite the Venezuelan people. What will be President Velasquez' priorities?

[Velasquez] You have answered half of your own question. Basically, we must seek ways to solve or alleviate the two limitations that you mentioned. However, we must add another important limitation to the two that you mentioned.

It is a semester, it is an electoral semester, but this is a period full of fiscal conflicts; serious fiscal conflicts, serious financial conflicts, and no less serious economic conflicts.

Naturally, this must be addressed responsibly. We must listen to the experts; listen to those hurt by the problem and seek at least temporary solutions through study, experience, and interest.

There is, however, an area that will increase in conflict and will greatly weaken democracy: It is the social area. The social situation most Venezuelan's are undergoing cannot be ignored or concealed. These are life's basic needs. This problem will not be solved within six months, but the problem cannot be masked, the dramatic situation cannot be ignored. This problem is a factor of instability to all other solutions.

I have noticed in modern day Venezuelans—in the new generations—a leadership that I underscored yesterday in my swearing-in ceremony. Although it may be true that people of younger democratic generations have shown great divergence, they have also shown a certain indifference and criticism toward political membership and activism. Throughout the country, a whole generation of social leaders has emerged who have become very concerned over the country's situation due to obvious inequities and maladjustments.

For decades, Venezuela lived in a bonanza while other Latin American countries struggled with devaluation, inflation, the drop in the price of their products—coffee, bananas, fish meal, and copper. We were saying: We do not deal with anyone else; we cannot. We have a powerful economy based on oil.

No statesman, while in power, was able to foresee or to avoid the effects of this crisis. This was foreseeable in the 1970's. The social leadership, the social organizations that seek to contribute formulas of study and practice, are very important for any task and is one of the symptoms of present-day Venezuela.

This is the end of a historic period, not just because of the specific crises that this administration went through, but because of the entire process that has been going on for the past 50 years during which the country has taken big steps, and regardless of errors and conflicts, party democracy set the basis for the creation and the strengthening of new forces that exist now.

Education programs were implemented throughout the country. Every village has a school, every town has a high

school, there are regional universities, scholarships abroad are being granted, private universities are being given facilities—all forms of education are being encouraged. This has produced, for better or for worse, a new kind of Venezuelan, a Venezuelan with an independent frame of mind, very different from the Venezuelan of the past, the shy and somewhat too common Venezuelan who was a product of successive dictatorships.

Like the population, modern Venezuelans have grown. They are in every region. This is creating a new situation. In each state there are admirable leaders. Why? Because citizens no longer have to move to Caracas to find a job. They can remain in Barquisimeto, or Puerto La Cruz, Maracaiblo, San Cristobal, Puerto Ordaz, etc. In those cities there are attorneys, doctors, engineers, economists, administrators, and planning experts. In the past, this people had to come to Caracas to look for a job in the ministries. Now they do not do that. Regional economies have been developed during the past 30 years and now those professionals have a place to work, a place to make a living. They know how to join the regional economy.

In those days when a group of poverty stricken young men from several countries [as heard], headed by Poncho Quijada, went to Portuguesa to conquer that territory, I went there with Saverio Barbarito. It was a wasteland at the time... [pauses] frozen plains. Those young men—Poncho, from Margarita; Argeni Vivas, from Apure; Sosa, from Caracas; Filardo Rodriguez, from Barquisimeto—became the pioneers of modern agriculture. They exerted influence over the region. Today's Venezuelan farmers are not illiterate. They know about seeds, about production; they know how to negotiate with the agricultural and industrial sectors; they know about the New York Stock Market. This is true in all of the regions.

The development of the eastern part of the country is fabulous. Venezuela's economic power in the 21st century lies there. God packed everything there: iron, bauxite, prodigious hydraulic resources to produce electricity, power. In the east there are oceans of gas, enough for building all sort of petrochemical industries; there is heavy oil. The same is true for [word indistinct]. This is Venezuelan power. We have farming land. Everybody should see the transformations that have been made in Guarico. I went there with Eugenio Mendoza, who invited me to plant the first seeds of sorghum.

The northern region of Guarico, the entire state, was paralyzed. The same is true for Anzoategui. Look at what is being done in Monagas, the way that Maturin, the way those plains have been turned into production centers. The will of the Venezuelans is admirable. There are new generations.

This is another factor that must be taken into account: Regional leaderships must be taken into consideration. Decisions may be adopted in the capital, but not in [word indistinct] if there are no social leaders who can provide ideas to produce transformations. They are seeing and sharing social problems in the neighborhoods, towns, and poor districts that encircle us as if they were about to seize the urban areas. Let's take this into consideration. Let's create awareness about this situation. The government that will reach power within four or five months must, regardless of the color of its banner, wave the banner of change and transformation. Otherwise the country will swallow it.

[Granier] Mr. President, you have just raised three issues that clearly evidences that the conflicts to which you were referring to a while ago. First of all, we have the issue of Venezuela's social problems. Here we see how, at the start of this previous administration, a very important evaluation was carried out through the ministries, headed by [Minister of Family] Marisela Padron and [PETROVEN president] Gustavo Rosen, with the objective of determining the social problems. In this respect, several plans were outlined to attack those inequalities. A similar evaluation program was continued under the direction of Teresa Alvanes. Therefore, if there is any sector where continuity is warranted, it is exactly the one that refers to the social problems because there has been an uninterrupted job of evaluation, policy outlining, and program implementation since 1989 to date. However, it is also one of the areas most sought after by the political parties because it opens the door to tremendous lobbying opportunities. In fact, we have already seen how during the December 1991 and February 1992 period, the direction of the social area ministries was handed over to political activists closely linked to political party lobbying machinery. Therefore, that is where you are going to have your first conflict; between the option to continue with what has already been done or to give in to the political parties lobbying machinery.

The second topic that you mentioned and one where there could also be similar conflicts, entails the fiscal deficit problem. The fiscal deficit has already been estimated by the government. In addition, the government has offered some solution to the issue. Basically, these solutions are included in an entire group of legislation that is currently in Congress. Some of these legislations are aimed at increasing fiscal revenues and others to cut central and decentralized government expenditures. Nevertheless, there are some vested interests that have prevented those laws from being approved. For example, Minister [Jose Francisco] Sucre Figarella does not want the Venezuela Corporation of Guayana [CVG] enterprises to be touched. In this respect, he has raised all of the obstacles that he has been able to find. There are party interests that do not agree with the plans to privatize some state enterprises because these enterprises represent an important source of financing, so they have also erected obstacles to the privatization plans. There are some financial institutions that have very serious liquidity problems, which has led to those outrageous interests with which the country has been forced to live. These financial institutions are not interested either in financial reforms. We could continue with a long list of the those sectors that, although have

recognized that the fiscal deficit is probably the most immediate and serious problem that the country has at this time, will continue to have their small share that they do not want anyone to touch. Therefore, this is also an issue where you will have to struggle against some interest groups with their ready-made solutions. In addition, you will have to confront those interests groups that have blocked the approval of laws that range from fiscal reform, petroleum industry reforms, reforms to the privatization bill, reform advancement programs, financial reform, banking reform, and so forth.

The third area that you have indicated where we clearly noted that there will also be discord is in the regionalization and decentralization issue. Evidently, as result of reasons that may be explained through history, recent national failures or whatever, the country is calling for an increase in the obligation of each region, or a process of decentralization. The majority of Venezuelans believe that each region is better equipped to understand its problems and are thus, better equipped to outline its own solutions than the central government. However, here we have also noticed some interests that opposed to this idea. There are political interests that are suspicious of the growth in popularity of governors and that is why they try to exclude them from the country's national decisions. These interests groups are not receptive to the idea of regional leadership, which is why the election law reforms are directed at preventing the rise in regional leadership and maintaining important power groups within the parties. Likewise there are also unions, businesses, and party interest groups intent on blocking regional, education, and health decentralization. There is also interest in preventing some activities from decentralizing. Therefore, you will also find conflict between one current that is calling for decentralization, regionalization, and more voting power, as opposed to those vested interests that are opposed to allowing this. Considering these three issues, which you have clearly pointed out, what will be your polices?

[Velasquez] I will first make a general definition and then I will go into more detail.

I have no illusions, whether it is three, six, or twelve months. I said it then and I repeat it now that due to the size of the crisis, each of these six months will equal one year, or perhaps more—due to the speed, due to the pressures, due to conflict of interests that seek to find a total solution to a problem that for 10 years they elected to ignore. I cannot understand it. That is why I said that perhaps the storm will sweep me away.

I want to be emphatic. The party leaders have not asked... [pauses] I said power quota because I will not exchange dignity for honor. Teresa Albanes is an eminent official with a long record of work outside Venezuela. She has discipline and honesty. She is a technician, but a technician with social awareness. I said it; we will make changes without violence. We will contribute with experts, the people who know about the problems, people who have taken part in think tanks.

I will tell you what occurs: I know very well that within the current structure the poor minister does not have time for anything because the administrative systems, which the reforms have failed to banish, force him to spend hours signing. Sometimes complications arise because he does not even have time to see what is contained in the orders. Then comes public and political relations, to which the minister has to attend—both government and opposition. Then come the social invitations that are part of the relations that take up the rest of the minister's time.

Ministers need to have an advisory team to study things, make recommendations, and help him with his work, without diluting his responsibility. We do not want people to say that the government spends the time making studies. No, that is not the idea of a permanent advisory team. A Roman count once asked: Are you a permanent reporter? The reply: Permanent for the time being. A permanent council for six months, why not?

Yesterday I asked Rosita [not further identified] why do we have an obligatory military service, which by the way, unlike in other countries, only the poor serve. Professors rest in Europe on two-year sabbaticals. Why not have in Venezuela an obligatory civil service? People say: I cannot serve as minister because my business does not allow me to; I cannot serve as minister because I do not want to run the political risk; I do not want to be minister because people will say that I stole what I have. Then why not contribute during a semester for a few hours, to reflect, to give an opinion? They will not be saddled with responsibilities; they will not have to declare before the General Comptroller's Office; they will not have to face reporters. They are, however, useful to the country because they can help the minister. The ministers and the president are responsible with making the decisions. Many people in Venezuela complain because no consultations are made. It is true. Now they will probably say time is lost making consultations. It's always one thing or another. It is a middle of the road course with consultations and decisions.

I see it all the time. The problems are so great that the wise formulas proposed by the... [pauses] Then the routine sets in. The routine and modern demands—an exclusive mixture.

Regarding the fiscal deficit and the financial situation, which are very serious problems, I can tell you that ever since I decided to accept the post, I have dedicated long hours to the Central Bank. I am going to open a consultative phase with the representatives of those sectors in the country, both in science and in experience. That is why in my message to the nation on 5 June, I did not broach the fiscal, financial, and economic phases. I will not do so until early this coming week.

Regarding the last of the three topics, regionalization, I was the first president of the commission for state reforms. I toured the country twice, raising the need of

decentralization. I went, together with Pedro Pablo Aguilar and Pompeyo Marquez, to present to the Congress the draft bill for the direct election of governors. That new power structure, the creation of regional power, is one of the reasons that has strengthened democracy and has alleviated the factors of the crisis.

Today, in each state there is a political reality, which is the product of the regional structure and not the whim of the president. Until that law was promulgated and applied, the president here appointed 20 proconsuls: one for Sucre, one for Tachira, and one for Falcon. That is a thing of the past and will never happen again. Today, each regional governor is the product of the majority decision of his region.

[Granier] Why can't he be the product of each senator and each deputy?

[Velasquez] Well, he should be. I am in favor of the direct vote. Now it depends on parliament's decision. But, going back to regional power, it must be decentralized. It must be decentralized. I have talked to the governors. The decentralization of power is a form of strengthening democracy. Democracy then is not a city phenomenon, but a national phenomenon. Look how each governor has gained importance. I am not speaking of those who are presidential candidates today. I speak of all the governors. There is a center of gravity. There is a center to discuss national problems. Then, I reiterate what I said earlier. Take the state, for instance. Today, there is an extraordinary situation. A governor who was elected by the majority. The majority of mayors are not of the AD, as in that case. What has happened at national level is extraordinary. That is what France boasts of, with its tradition of respect of freedom and coalitions. Here, 10 or 12 governors of the most important states: Zulia, Falcon, Yaracuy, Carabobo, Aragua, Guarico, Anzoategui, Sucre, and Bolivar are of the opposition, of Copei, or of the R Cause. The experience throughout these two years has been magnificent.

The relations between the national and regional governments has been magnificent. We must strengthen them and we must give them power. Even though I am an enemy of the ministries, I am going to make an exception. I am going to create a ministry of decentralization. This will speed up the process and make this possible.

[Granier] From your answers to these three issues I believe there will be continuity. This should be reassuring for the country. However, throughout the program and in your answers to these three issues it is clear that the political parties will not be part of the government. Venezuelan democracy is basically a party regime, therefore, I would like to ask you what support you will have if you cannot have the support of the political parties?

[Velasquez] Well, they do not want to be part of the government or in the decisionmaking process. However, they have offered parliamentarian support and they have also promised to support the decisions made. I believe that this promise must become a reality within these new circumstances otherwise it would be absurd. They created this situation and they just cannot leave it in mid air. No, no.

I am going to talk to the political parties—to all of the political parties. Since they do not want to be part of the government, their role will be within the opposition. On 6 June I asked that an electoral debate be held throughout the next six months. We have hard days ahead. The next government will have a very heavy burden to carry. We must take advantage of the next few months and hold a debate. The government cannot meddle in the debate, and the idea is not to turn it into a debate of analysts and politicians—absolutely not. It must be an opportunity to discuss national topics. It must not be used for political confrontations of who is doing what.

[Granier] You are creating a serious problem for the candidates. To date, the four candidates have based their campaign on criticizing the government, the work of the government, the president, his personal life, his actions, and all his friends. Now Ramon J. Velasquez has assumed power. What are the candidates going to do? Their source of inspiration has dried up. The four of them are sort of lost now.

[Velasquez] No, I think the time is appropriate for the type of electoral debate we have every 30 years. Like the famous debate between Romulo Betancourt, Rafael Caldera, and Wolfgang Larrazabal. I recall that Wolfgang Larrazabal was backed by Jovito Villalba, (Arturo Wunder), and Miguel Otero Silva. These were outstanding men.

I recall Rafael Caldera proposing his candidacy and Romulo Betancourt was touring the country. I recall that Betancourt would meet with the economic sectors. I accompanied him on those tours. He approached all of the Chambers of Commerce, the Chambers of Agriculture, the cattle ranchers, and the teachers. We had a real idea of what today we call the national situation.

I believe that the candidates have very little time left to study the situation and propose topics for the debate. I repeat, this is not just junk or theory, this is the dramatic examination of the Venezuelan situation. The dimension of the problem is such that it affects everyone. When the oil problem began and the oil sales dropped the wages of the government employees dropped and the whole country was living the problem. The oil dollar made everything very easy. However, that is not the case today. Today, the state owes and the population because of the high cost of living and the devaluation. Therefore, the 20 million Venezuelans will check closely before they cast their vote for the man who will be head of state.

The time taken by the people today to check on the ministers and governors is greater. In the past no one cared. Today, they do care because there is greater awareness among the people. Today's Venezuelan is knowingly a democrat and the social needs that surround

him force him to check into what is going on. This forces him to take sides. This had never been the case in Venezuela. Therefore, the presidential candidates must promote the debate.

Lastly, I believe the people who represent the economic groups, the social groups, and the church, should be frequently consulted by the government to find out if it is headed in the right direction, to find out if changes can be made. The governors should also be consulted. In addition to the candidates, the governors, the economic groups, the academic sector, I will also consult the media because within the new structure of the Venezuelan Government the media has the power that the political parties are losing. The media has the power to control and direct, something that other groups are losing. The power of the media is one of the phenomena of the modern world. Just like in [word indistinct] famous phrase, global village [aldea global], everyone uses to defend themselves, in that village created by the television and other media, but in closed circuit because they—the television and the press—assist one another; there is power. You can direct or misdirect; you can build or destroy. Since the political parties have not taken into consideration this universal change in the conduct of the people and the appearance of these new powers, when they assume power they use the media and nothing more. All they use is the small screen. However, the media must be aware of the constructive and destructive power it has; it must be aware of the power it has to direct or misdirect. Politics are not possible today if an agreement is not reached with the media. The media is the instrument of democracy. Through the media the message will reach seven, eight, 20 million Venezuelans. The media is the only source of information for many Venezuelans who live in the remote Amazon area, in Zulia State, and Tachira State. The media is the only way for them to be informed on what is happening in the capital city. I contribute with the new forms of organization, the governors, civic associations, the people, and particularly the media.

Venezuelan democracy has an excellent platform. It was the last country in this century to attain a democratic government. Eleazar Lopez Contreras and Isaias Medina were admirable rulers who were aware of changes. They had no obligations; one was the result of a dictatorship, but he had awareness and he transformed 1936 into a year when the new country was born.

Imagine what an intact Gomecista [followers of Juan Vicente Gomez] Army meant for Lopez Contreras. There was no form of organization. The leaders who began appearing, Betancourt, Villalba, Gustavo Machado, Salvador de la Plaza, Felipe Hernandez in Zulia State, and Balmore Rodriguez, were unknowns to the Venezuelan people, the Venezuelan who was the product of successive dictatorships, the Venezuelan who even feared the local policeman. There was no form of organization other than the Army and the Church. No other organization. Lopez Contreras, risking a civil war—there was an anti-Gomecista sentiment and pro the rights of man—decided to take off his uniform and dress in civilian clothes and allow the creation of political parties. One of these parties was the ORVE [Venezuelan Organization Movement], which was later to become the PDN [National Democratic Party] and today the AD. There was another party that was called UNE [expansion unknown], which later became National Action, and today we know it as Copei. Another party was the PRP [expansion unknown], it was a Marxist organization which was later known as Municipal Action, Municipal Union, Popular Union, and later the Communist Party. In other words, the political composition of the country, which we have had for the past 50 years, was possible when Lopez Contreras was born into this century.

In less than six months—six months after the death of General Gomez—the members of the Revolutionary Liberation Junta—Delgado Charbo, Rufino Blanco, Jose Rafael Pocaterra, Santos Dominich, Alberto Smith, Hermogenes Rivero—were here as members of the Council of Ministers, at the side of promising young men such as Arturo Usla, Alberto Adrian, Amenodoro Rangel Lamus, Tulio Ochosoni, and Manuel Legana, an irreproachable generation that had an excellent formation. They, with their frame of mind and the aid of an important man, Diogenes Escalante, were able to guide the country toward the February Program. This was the first time that the Venezuelan state admitted that there is misery, illness, illiteracy, and said: Let us work on that.

The first labor code was promulgated within six months, prior to the existence of labor organizations. The law envisaged warning period, seniority, unemployment, revenue sharing, child labor, pregnancy. The code created labor courts and commissions. The code established pedagogic missions, through the National Pedagogic Institute, to develop education. There was the struggle for health, headed by Enrique Tejera and Gordo Gavaldon. Gavaldon fought the yellow fever; Baldo fought tuberculosis; Pastor Oropeza fought gastroenteritis; Leopoldo Garcia Maldonado and Castillo Plaza fought for an improved national health structure.

We cannot forget that. If democracies result from voting, we can say that the first election, the election of Romulo Gallegos, was frustrated. That election was followed by this 34-year period.

Today's Venezuelans, who are full of conflicts, have firmness and a will. We have gone through the most serious crisis that a country can have. We can see, though, how the prosecutor, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the Congress, have acted and how this culminated in this election. The country understands the process. Had this been a wild country, a country without democratic convictions...[pauses]

While Octavio Lepage was in the presidency there were two regional elections that were won by the opposition. This is fine. In December, a few days after the 27 November [events], there were also elections. This

means that the country has a democratic life that must be respected by the Presidency and by the government.

[Granier] To conclude, Mr. President, as you have clearly stated, I believe that the majority of the Venezuelans are proud of the institutions that you have mentioned. I believe that it would be fair to include in this feeling the suspended president, Carlos Andres Perez and ministers Izaguirre and Figueredo. They have acted not in the way that people in power have traditionally acted. It is evident that the country's institutions and men have matured. As you have said, the Supreme Electoral Council, which has been very much criticized by the people, has also performed in an exemplary, correct, fast, and clear fashion in these elections and in the elections of December 1992.

We have many reasons for being satisfied with the way our institutions are functioning. We are also proud that a person like you, that you, specifically, were elected to this post. We feel this way because of your political and academic record and your family and professional life. I think that all of the Venezuelan people are proud that you have this post. You have partially answered the question that I had in mind, but there is a part that you have been unable to answer, because I have not yet asked my question.

What can we Venezuelans do? You have told us what the media can do. What can we Venezuelans do to help you in these eight months of government ahead of you, so that the country can be even better than when you reached the Presidency?

[Velasquez] I want to begin by telling you that President Carlos Andres Perez and Ministers Alejandro Izaguirre and Reinaldo Figueredo have had an exemplary conduct, showing respect of institutionality. In the case of Carlos Andres Perez, he has been consistent with his background. Among many other things, I want to point this out. The draft bill for the election of governors had a lot of opposition from those parties that had a majority in the parliament. There was steadfast opposition. This occurred until I spoke to him. A group from the reform commission spoke to him. He promoted a meeting with the other presidential candidates to reach the signing of an agreement. This was called the pact of the reforms. It did away with all the overt and covert opposition to that law. I believe that the law changed the political scenario in terms of complying with court and Congress decisions. As for Dr. Alejandro Izaguirre and Dr. Reinaldo Figueredo, their actions as parliamentarians, to facilitate both fulfillment of the Supreme Court request, as well as the other efforts and other actions that followed, were evidence of those national leaders' respect for institutional order and reaffirmed their democratic convictions. What can we all do? We can force the country, without turmoil, in the face of its current difficulties, to seek a path of understanding. We don't seek the impossible. What we seek is to have this government move toward the definition of its policies, which are basically aimed at trying to resolve the crisis, so that the country can reach the month of December. That first Sunday of December will bring the answer to the future of Venezuela.

[Granier] Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you friends for your attention.

Politicians Comment on New Venezuelan President

PA0706001993 Caracas Venezolana de Television Network in Spanish 0000 GMT 6 Jun 93

[Text] The swearing in of the new constitutional president of Venezuela triggered various reactions among the political and legal public figures of the country. Many agreed that Ramon J. Velasquez will know how to promote a peaceful transition in the continuation of the national democratic process.

[Begin recording] [Former Venezuelan President Luis Herrera Campins] The new government must be broad and one of permanent dialogue. The announcement that the new president will be advised by permanent commissions made up of Venezuelan experts in the various fields is a good sign that the new government, which will lead the transition toward the change that Venezuela needs, is on the right path.

[Former Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera] I believe Dr. Velasquez has the necessary experience and he knows what is happening in Venezuela. I am convinced that he will do his best to ensure a smooth transition into the next constitutional period.

[Unidentified speaker] Dr. Velasquez is moderately optimistic in light of the challenge he currently faces. His words are proof of this. He is aware that there are many difficulties, but he is also aware that these difficulties can be tackled. He is a very humble person and he is quite aware of his human limitations. I believe this is important. He wants to serve rather than to show off the fact that he holds the highest office in the country.

[Unidentified speaker] Velasquez has taken over at a very difficult and confusing time. The most important thing that he must do is clear the uncertainty that prevails in the country. He must ensure peace and work in the direction pointed by our bishops in the document issued by the Episcopal Conference in January. He must work for conciliation and solidarity in Venezuela. Most importantly, he must work to unite the Venezuelan people. Velasquez must govern through the transition period, through the elections and the swearing in of the next president. He must also attempt to establish the groundwork for economic growth with social justice. [end recording]